PAPER B

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL PLANNING SUB COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 16 JULY 2012

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

WARNING

1. THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT OTHER THAN PART 1 SCHEDULE AND DECISIONS ARE DISCLOSED FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY.

2. THE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED ON THE DATE INDICATED ABOVE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. (In some circumstances, consideration of an item may be deferred to a later meeting).

3. THE RECOMMENDATIONS MAY OR MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE PLANNING COMMITTEE AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO ALTERATION IN THE LIGHT OF FURTHER INFORMATION RECEIVED BY THE OFFICERS AND PRESENTED TO MEMBERS AT MEETINGS.

4. YOU ARE ADVISED TO CHECK WITH THE DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT (TEL: 821000) AS TO WHETHER OR NOT A DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON ANY ITEM BEFORE YOU TAKE ANY ACTION ON ANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT.

5. THE COUNCIL CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANY ACTION TAKEN BY ANY PERSON ON ANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS.

Background Papers

The various documents, letters and other correspondence referred to in the Report in respect of each planning application or other item of business.

Members are advised that every application on this report has been considered against a background of the implications of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and, where necessary, consultations have taken place with the Crime and Disorder Facilitator and Architectural Liaison Officer. Any responses received prior to publication are featured in the report under the heading Representations.

Members are advised that every application on this report has been considered against a background of the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 and, following advice from the Deputy Director of Resources (Corporate Governance), in recognition of a duty to give reasons for a decision, each report will include a section explaining and giving a justification for the recommendation.

Reference Number: P/00706/11 - TCP/27774/A
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Five wind turbines (100m to the tip of a rotor blade in a vertical position) provision of crane hardstandings, control buildings, substation, underground cabling, temporary construction compound, new access tracks off Broad Lane and Thorley Street (B3401) to accommodate construction traffic and a permanent 65m high anemometer mast (readvertised application - additional information received).

Land south of Wellow/east of Holmfield Avenue, west of Stoneovers and off, Broad Lane, Shalcombe, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.

The application is recommended for refusal of planning permission.

REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

This is a major planning application that is subject to an Environmental Statement and under the Council's constitution it is required to be presented before the Planning Committee for a decision. The application has also proved to be contentious attracting over 2,000 letters of representation from third parties, citing visual landscape impact and impact on neighbouring residential properties as principal reasons for concern.

MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are as follows:

- The principle of wind turbines in this location.
- Landscape and visual impact of the proposed wind turbines.
- Ecology, natural habitats and trees.
- Noise and the potential for impacts on residential amenity.
- Cultural heritage and archaeology.
- Highway impacts including the proposed construction route.
- Socio-economic impacts.

1. Details of Application

1.1 This application, which is accompanied by an Environmental Statement, seeks full planning permission for the installation of five wind turbines on agricultural land to the south of Wellow/Thorley as a renewable energy project. The proposed turbines would have a maximum height to the hub of 65 metres, with a 35 metre long blade, giving a maximum total height to blade tip of 100 metres and configured in a row of three and a row of two turbines. It is noted that the precise manufacturer / model for the turbine has not yet been finalised. Calculations for noise and the visual impact assessments are nevertheless based on an Enercon E70 turbine. The towers supporting the turbines would be bolted to a disc shaped reinforced concrete plinth approximately 17 metres in diameter to a depth of 3 metres, which would be partially backfilled with spoil to leave a 7 metre diameter plinth exposed. The tower itself is indicated as typically having a diameter of 4.2 metres at the base. The grid co-oridinates for the turbine and anemometry mast are shown in the table below;

Turbine	Easting	Northing	Level (AOD)
1	437806	87679	33
2	437785	87346	46
3	438203	87646	43

4	438184	87323	56
5	438164	87000	66
Anemometer Mast	437977	87386	55

1.2 Each turbine has a maximum generating capacity of 2.5 MW and the applicant estimates that the development would have a maximum generating capacity of 12.5 MW of electricity per year. The electricity would be exported to the national grid via an underground cable from new control and substation buildings within a compound sited approximately 10 metres from the proposed access road from Broad Lane. Indicative plans show that the control building would be 13.0 x 7.5 metres with a mono-pitch roof to a height of 6.1 metres.

1.3 The applicant has provided an indicative route for the cable connection to the National Grid, which is shown to be via an underground cable running alongside the eastern side of Broad Lane to a 33 kv overhead power line which runs east-west approximately 50 metres to the south of Main Road, Thorley. It should be noted that the actual grid connection details would be the subject of a separate planning application.

1.4 The application also proposes that a permanent anemometry mast would be installed on the site to gather wind speed data as a means of monitoring efficiency of the turbines to act as an overall control facility for the turbine group. This is proposed as a 65 metre high steel lattice structure, topped with a wind vane and wind gauge.

1.5 It is estimated that the construction period for the project would total 24 weeks from initial site preparation works through various phases of construction of the turbines. Internal access roads would be constructed from Broad Lane into the site at a point approximately 1.4 km to the south of Main Road, Wellow. The access tracks would be 5.0 metres wide constructed of 0.3 metres of sub-base material topped with a 0.2 metre hard surface. Alongside each turbine a crane hardstanding approximately 40 metres square would be provided to allow the construction and removal of the turbines.

1.6 Road access for the transportation of the turbine components to the site would be via abnormal loads by articulated lorry and trailer. The applicant's two preferred routes for the transportation of the blades to the site would be either; from the Medina Wharf to Arctic Road in Cowes and onto the A3020 Newport Road to the A3054 (Forest Road), or from the Vestas wharf facility at Newport via Monks Brook and Dodnor Lane to A3054. Vehicles would then progress along the A3054 to Yarmouth, where they would turn in the public car park and then return along the A3054 to turn right into Station Road, Shalfleet and then into Thorley Street and into Broad Lane from the north. As part of these works the applicant is proposing the construction of alterations to the eastern side of the junction of Broad Lane with Main Road to provide a temporary wider access. The return route would be the same to avoid the southern Broad Lane access.

1.7 The turbines are designed to operate for a period of approximately 25 years, after which time they can be decommissioned, a process which would take approximately six months, unless planning permission was granted for a further extension in time for operation or the installation of new turbines. The Environmental Statement states that the turbines would be dismantled and removed from the site, with the concrete bases left underground and covered with top soil. Once disconnected it is proposed that the underground cables would be left underground. It is proposed that the access tracks would be left intact to provide future access to the agricultural land and the crane hardstandings either left or removed to a depth of 0.6 metres and the land re-instated. Once the equipment has been removed the control buildings would either be left for an alternative use or removed from the site.

1.8 In promoting the scheme the applicants have stated that in addition to the renewable energy benefits of the scheme in terms of annual carbon saving, the wind farm would contribute financially towards a community fund to be invested in local community projects. This would

commit the developer to provide £2,000 per MW per year for the lifetime of the project. The applicant also proposed to implement a Local Energy Organisation, which would offer households in close proximity to the development discounted electricity, in the form of £100 rebate for households directly neighbouring the site and a 10% discount for energy for households in surrounding areas for a green energy provided.

1.9 The Environmental Statement (ES) covers the following main issues under the following headings;

- A description of the project.
- Need for the project and the alternatives considered.
- Scoping, consultation and methodology.
- Landscape and visual impact.
- Terrestrial ecology and nature conservation.
- Ornithology.
- Historic environment.
- Transport.
- Noise and vibration.
- Air quality and climate change.
- Flood risk, hydrology and water quality.
- Land use and community benefits.
- Geology, ground conditions and groundwater.
- Shadow flicker and shadowing.

2. Location and Site Characteristics

2.1 The submitted layout plan shows that the turbines would be configured in two rows around 400 metres apart containing 3 and 2 turbines respectively on land currently in agricultural use to the south of Thorley Street and Wellow. Turbine (No. 2) would be sited approximately 120 metres to the east of Broad Lane, with turbine No. 3 approximately 620 metres to the north of Main Road, Wellow. The turbines themselves would be separated by a distance of approximately 320 metres.

2.2 The site is situated to the east of Broad Lane a single track road linking the B3401 (Main Road, Thorley) to the B3399 (Newport Road). The settlement of Thorley Street is situated approximately 1.0 km to the north of the site, with houses in Main Road around 800 metre from turbine 1 and dwellings in Wellow around 650 metres from turbine 3.

2.3 The application site has a rural setting with an elevation of around 45 AOD, on the northern slope of a low plateau forming part of the catchment area of Thorley Brook, with Turbine 1 being at a height of around 38 metres AOD and Turbine 5 at around 67 AOD. The area comprises large open arable fields which have been adopted for modern agricultural practices through the removal of hedgerows.

2.4 The application site is not within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), but is surrounded on three sides by the AONB, the closest point being approximately 1 km to the south of the site formed by the B3399. The southern backdrop to the site is formed by the chalk downland comprising Afton Down, Compton Down, Tapnell Down and Shalcombe Down, the ridgeline of which is around 1.5 km from the southernmost of the proposed turbines. Tennyson Down is approximately 5 km to the west of the site.

2.5 There is currently no vehicular access to the application site with only informal access for agricultural vehicles to the fields.

2.6 Public footpath Y10 / S34 runs east – west from Tapnell Farm to Churchills Farm past the southern end of the application site, to within 105 metres of Turbine 5. Public footpath S18

runs north – south from Broad Lane to Wellow to the east of the application site, around 100 metres from Turbines 3, 4 and 5. A further bridleway S19 runs parallel to S18 from Prospect Quarry on Broad Lane past Hummet Copse to Wellow.

3. Relevant Planning History

3.1 A planning application (P/01400/06) for 6 wind turbines comprising 4 turbines with a 59m hub height and 100m overall height (tip height) and 2 turbines with a 68.5m hub height and 109.5m overall height (tip height) and a 59 m anemometer mast with associated infrastructure in a similar location to the current proposal was refused planning permission on 22 November 2006. Seven reasons for refusal were given which are set out in full below. Members should note that this decision was not subject to an appeal and in any event the policy context has changed since this decision was made.

1 *The scale, size and layout of the proposed development is such that it will result in significant adverse visual impact in the landscape, to the detriment of the amenities of a large number of residential properties within the locality, including those in Wellow and Thorley, on users of the Hamstead and Tennyson Down Trails, and on users of National Trust open access land. In consequence, the proposal is contrary to Policies G4 (General Locational Criteria for Development), DI (Standards of Design), C1 (Protection of Landscape Character) and U18 (Development of Renewable Energy) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan, as well as to the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Wind Turbines and Wind Farms. It is also contrary to Policy INF8 of RPG9, Policy EN5 of the Draft South East Plan and Policy ENV2 of the Isle of Wight Local Development Framework Core Strategy (as submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2006).*

2 *The scale, size and layout of the proposed development will result in significant adverse impact on the Landscape Character of the West Wight especially on Compton Down, Brighstone Down (unforested slopes), Tennyson Down, and on the Yar and Newtown estuaries, as well as on the landscape character of the site itself. In consequence, the proposal is contrary to Polices G4 (General Locational Criteria for Development), D1 (Standards of Design), C1 (Protection of Landscape Character) and UI8 (Development of Renewable Energy) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance on Wind Turbines and Wind Farms. It is also contrary to Policy INF8 of RPG9, Policy EN5 of the Draft South East Plan and policy ENV2 of the Isle of Wight Local Development Framework Core Strategy (as submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2006).*

3 *The scale, size and layout of the proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on the character and value of the West Wight area of the Isle of Wight AONB to an extent that it will compromise the statutory purpose of the AONB. In consequence, the proposal is contrary to Policy C2 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan and the adopted supplementary planning guidance on Wind turbines and Wind Farms.*

4 *The proposed development, in combination with the consented Cheverton Down Scheme, if implemented, will result in significant adverse cumulative impact on landscape character and visual amenity. This impact is contrary to Policies C1 (Protection of Landscape Character), C2 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), D1 (Standards of Design) and U18 (Development of Renewable Energy) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan.*

5 *The submitted information fails to demonstrate that adequate consideration has been given to mitigation of identified substantial adverse landscape and visual impacts, through examination of alternative sites or alternative scheme designs for the application site. In consequence, the proposal is contrary to Policies C1 (Protection of Landscape Character), C2 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and U18 (Development of Renewable Energy) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan.*

6 *The proposed development will result in an unacceptable impact on existing public rights of way, to the detriment of access thereof, and as such is contrary to policy TR17 (Public Rights of Way) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan.*

7 *Notwithstanding the information submitted, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will have an insignificant impact on the nature conservation status of bats and as such the application is contrary to Policy C8 (Nature Conservation as a Material Consideration) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan.*

3.2 On 16 February 2011 temporary planning permission (P/01553/10) was granted for a period of five years for siting of an 80 metre high anemometer tower on this site. This permission has not yet been implemented.

3.3 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA Regs) to assess the cumulative impact of such development, therefore Members should be aware that planning permission (P/00973/01) exists for 3 wind turbines with a hub height of 30 metres, with a 22 metre blade giving a tip height of 52 metres at Cheverton Down approximately 6.5 km to the south-east of the application site. The more recent proposed scheme for 3 number 125 metres (revised to 110 metres) was refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal in August 2011.

3.4 In addition, there are current planning applications for; a single wind turbine with a hub height of 55 metres and blade length of 36 metres (a total height to tip of 81 metres) at Great Park, (application P/00176/11), which is approximately 8 km to the east of the application site, and an application (P/00491/12) for two turbines with a tip height of 125 metres on land to the north of Camphill Prison approximately 10.5 km to the north-east of the application site.

4. Development Plan Policy

4.1 There are a range of policies and guidance to which the LPA is obliged to have regard in weighing the merits of this application. This section of the report outlines this context in some detail as it is critical to the determination of the proposal.

National Strategies and Policy

4.2 *The Energy White Paper: Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy (2003)* - The Energy White Paper sets out the Government's policies in response to future challenges to energy. The first challenge is identified as climate change and the need to put the country on a path towards a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions; the second challenge is the decline of the country's indigenous energy supplies and the problems of security of supply; the third is the need to update much of the country's energy infrastructure over the next two decades.

4.3 The Government aims to cut the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with real progress by 2020, and to maintain reliable and competitive energy supplies. Having already set a target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by

2010, the White Paper sets out the Government's aspiration to double that figure to 20% by 2020, and suggests that still more renewable energy will be needed beyond that date.

4.4 *The Energy Challenge: Energy Review Report 2006, published in July 2006.* This report gives a renewed commitment to the need for renewable energy. Annex D states *'A regulatory environment that enables the development of appropriately sited renewable projects, and allows the UK to realise its extensive renewable resources, is vital if we are to make real progress towards our challenging goals'*. The report continues *'New renewable projects may not always appear to convey any particular local benefit, but they provide crucial national benefits. Individual renewable projects are part of a growing proportion of low-carbon generation that provides benefits shared by all communities both through reduced emissions and more diverse supplies of energy, which helps the reliability of our supplies. This factor is a material consideration to which all participants in the planning system should give significant weight when considering renewable proposals.'*

4.5 *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Energy, published in May 2007* **-** The Energy White Paper, May 2007 confirms the requirement for 10% of UK electricity to come from renewable energy by 2010 and 20% by 2020. It also underlines that applicants do not have to demonstrate either the overall need for renewable energy or for their particular proposal to be sited in a particular location, and gives a clear steer to planners and local authority decision makers, that in considering applications they should look favorably on renewable energy developments.

4.6 *Climate Change Act 2008* - In March 2007, the Government announced a climate change bill, which proposed, amongst other matters, to put into statute the UK's targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, to at least 26% below 1990 levels by 2020 and to at least 60% by 2050.

4.7 In February 2008, the Government announced a review of the target to reduce the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by at least 60% by 2050. The review considered a higher target of 80% for greenhouse gas emission reductions. This has now been accepted and the Bill setting the legally binding targets was enacted on the 26 November 2008. The 2020 target is to be reviewed soon after Royal Assent to reflect the move to all greenhouse gases and the increase in the 2050 target.
Two key aims underpin the Act:

1. To improve carbon management and help the transition towards a low carbon economy in the UK; and
2. To demonstrate strong UK leadership internationally, signalling that the UK is committed to taking its share of responsibility for reducing global emissions.

4.8 *Electricity Market Reform White Paper 2011; Planning Our Electric Future – a White Paper for Secure, Affordable and Low Carbon Electricity.* This White Paper sets out the Government's commitment to transform the UK's electricity system to ensure that our future electricity supply is secure, low carbon and affordable. To decarbonise electricity generation it is highlighted that it is vital that the 15% renewable target is met by 2020 and 80% carbon reduction target by 2050.

4.9 *The UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (July 2011)* reiterates the commitment to deliver 15% of the UK's energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020. The document highlights that 8 technologies are capable of delivering more than 90% of the renewable energy need for 2020. Onshore wind is identified as one of these technologies and seen as potentially contributing 13 GW of electricity by 2020. One of the priority actions in the Roadmap is the reformation of the planning system to assist in delivering the infrastructure needed to reduce carbon emissions, including the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.10 On 18th July 2011 the Government approved six *National Policy Statements for Energy* (NPS). The Governments Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) sets out the high level objectives, policy and regulatory framework for new nationally significant infrastructure projects and key principles to be followed in the examination and determination of applications. Planning decisions will need to be taken within the policy framework set out in the NPSs.

4.11 *National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)* is aimed at nationally significant renewable energy infrastructure, which with regard to onshore wind is seen as schemes with a generating capacity over 50 MW. The current application at 12.5 MW thus falls below this threshold. However, EN-3 sets out a list of technical considerations when determining applications for onshore wind farms which are; Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, Historic Environment, Landscape and Visual Impact, Noise and Vibration, Shadow Flicker, and Traffic and Transport all of which are relevant to the consideration of this application.

4.12 In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which replaced the former Planning Policy Statements (PPS's) and Planning Guidance Notes (PPGs). This new document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Guidance is given in this document to local authorities in both the preparation of local plan making and in the determination of planning applications.

4.13 The NPPF sets out three roles (economic, social and environmental) that should be performed by the planning system. The Framework states that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages
- moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature
- replacing poor design with better design
- improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure and
- widening the choice of high quality homes

4.14 The NPPF includes several sections which are of direct relevance to this renewable energy project.

4.15 Section 10 of the NPPF sets out the Government's objectives for meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, in which the planning system has a key role in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

4.16 In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should;

- Not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
- Approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

4.17 The objectives of the planning system for conserving and enhancing the natural and local environment are set out in Section 11 of the NPPF. These aims include;

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;

- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystems;
- Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.

4.18 Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

4.19 When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles; including;

- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- Proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have and adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should be refused.
- Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees outside ancient woodland unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh the loss.

4.20 Planning policies and decisions should aim to;

- Avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development.
- Mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through use of conditions;
- Identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for there recreational and amenity value for this reason.

4.21 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out policies for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Within this section local planning authorities are advised to recognise heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.

4.22 In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

4.23 Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

4.24 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

4.25 The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of a heritage asset.

Local Plan Policy

4.26 The *Island Plan Core Strategy* was adopted in March 2012. The following policies of the Core Strategy are considered to be relevant to this application;

- SP5; Environment – Supports proposals that protect, conserve and / or enhance the Island's natural and historic environments, and protect the integrity of internal, national and local designations. All development proposals will be expected to take account of the environmental capacity of the area to accommodate new development. Development which has a demonstrable adverse impact on the Island's natural, historic and built environments should be avoided.

- SP6; Renewables - a range of renewable energies will be encouraged across the Island to meet its target of up to 100 MW installed capacity as the on-shore contribution to becoming self-sufficient in renewable electricity production. The Council believes the renewable energy target can be met through the following potential minimum contributions from a range of proven technologies:

  - At least 22.5 MW from wind
  - At least 15 MW from photovoltaics
  - At least 7.4 MW from waste
  - At least 6 MW from biomass

  It is expected that the remaining 50 MW capacity will be met from a combination of smaller scale and domestic installations, schemes granted permission but not yet built and schemes using imported fuels. Within areas of protected and sensitive landscapes development should generally be small-scale or community based. It is also expected that large-scale wind and photovoltaic schemes will be located outside of the AONB (and grade 1-3a agricultural land for photovoltaics).

- SP7; Travel - Offers support for proposals that increase travel opportunities and provide alternative means of travel to the car. Development proposals should not negatively impact on the Island's strategic road network, or the capacity of lower level roads to support the proposed development.

- DM2; Design Quality for New Development – Gives support to proposals for high quality and inclusive design to protect, conserve and enhance the existing environment whilst allowing change to take place. Proposals will be expected to provide an attractive, functional and adaptable built environment, optimise the potential of the site taking into account constraints, be appropriately landscaped and compliment the surrounding area.

- DM11; Historic and Built Environment – Supports proposals that positively conserve and enhance the special character of the Island's historic and built environment. The demolition or substantial harm to designated heritage assets and their settings which make a positive contribution to the special character and/or local identity of an area, will be resisted.

- DM12; Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity – Supports proposals that conserve, enhance, and promote the landscape, seascape, biodiversity and geological interest of the Island.

- DM16; Renewables – The Council will, in principle, support proposals for the utilisation, distribution and the development of renewable sources of energy. Development proposals will be expected to;

    - Be informed by a landscape character assessment.
    - Demonstrate how the provision of renewable energy in the proposed location contributes to the viability and financial sustainability of Island business and communities.
    - Reflect the capacity and sensitivity of the landscape of the Island, in line with Policy DM12.

- DM17; Sustainable Travel – Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they are well related to the Island's Strategic Road Network and that the network has adequate capacity to accommodate the development.

Other Council Strategies and Plans/locally adopted guidance

4.27 **The Isle of Wight's Sustainable Community Strategy 'Eco-Island' 2008-2020** sets out how the Isle of Wight will become a thriving, dynamic and confident community, in balance with its local environment. This strategy has been developed by the Island Strategic Partnership (the ISP). Relevant statements made in the Eco-Island Strategy are:

- The ISP wants the Island to have the lowest carbon footprint in England by 2020.
- We will invest in renewable energy technologies and use energy and water more efficiently.

4.28 **The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009 - 2014** describes the character of the AONB today. It then provides a vision for the AONB in 2025, sets out the current threats and challenges we face in conserving and enhancing the area, and states the policies that will guide us towards our vision. Relevant policies are:

LC-P3 Ensure the outstanding natural beauty and special characteristics of the AONB landscape are given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

EH-P3 Ensure the earth heritage resource is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

W-P3 Ensure wildlife is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

HE-P3 Ensure the historic environment is given due consideration in all policies, strategies, regulatory processes and other activities.

4.29 **Isle of Wight Council Corporate Plan 2011 – 2013** –This is the Council's main strategic planning document, which sets out the local authority's focus for the period to 2013. It identifies 7 key priorities, one of which is Regeneration and the Economy. This priority will focus on 6 economic commitments:

- Increasing inward investment;
- Provision of sufficient employment land;
- Development of a skilled workforce in key sectors;
- Promotion and expansion of renewable energy activities;
- Installation of a superfast broadband network;
- Developing and promoting a 21st century tourism offer.

5. Consultee and Third Party Comments

Internal Consultees

5.1 Isle of Wight Council's Tree Officer concludes that consent should not be permitted for the development until information has been provided by the applicant to allow an assessment of the tree impact along the whole of the intended delivery route to the site. The Tree Officer has identified a number of potential locations along the proposed construction route where trees on third party land may be affected. These are specifically referred to within the evaluation section of the report.

5.2 Isle of Wight Council's Senior Ecology Officer in terms of the impact on bird populations has concluded that the likelihood of significant impacts upon Golden Plover populations arising from the proposed development is low, and recommends that a robust programme of bird monitoring should be agreed with the Isle of Wight Council and Natural England prior to the development becoming operational.

The Senior Ecology Officer concludes that potential impacts upon bats would be been minimised and, as a result and based upon current understanding, significant impacts upon bat populations are unlikely. The Officer suggests that should the application be permitted, a robust programme of bat monitoring should be agreed with the Isle of Wight Council and Natural England prior to the development becoming operational is recommended.

The Senior Ecology Officer also commented that there may be recent badger sett activity in the vicinity of the approach road which has not been recorded by the consultants as this activity may be more recent than the surveys carried out by the consultants. Therefore it is recommended that a further badger survey is undertaken to inform the precise location of the temporary access road off Broad Lane as it may not be able to be constructed according to the plans submitted. The Senior Ecology Officer suggests that this may be satisfactorily covered through a condition in the event of granting planning permission.

5.3 The Isle of Wight Council Planning Archaeologist comments that the Environmental Statement fulfils the minimum required to register the application but fails to demonstrate a critical analysis of the impacts of the proposed scheme and represents a lost opportunity to fully address the impacts of the scheme on local receptors which provide the context for the proposal.

In terms of the physical impact of the development on below ground archaeological deposits the Planning Archaeologist has commented that the results of a field survey indicate that previously unknown archaeological deposits exist across the site, although the location of the trenching does not appear to coincide with the projected turbine bases in most cases. However it is considered that enough of a sample has been investigated to arrive at a mitigation strategy. In the event of approval it is considered that the ground effects can be mitigated by the implementation of a robust archaeological investigation, which should include the full excavation of any archaeological remains within the footprint of any new structure including crane pads and ancillary services.

In relation to the visual impact on the setting of above ground Cultural Heritage the Planning Archaeologist has expressed concerns that the information provided within the Heritage Statement is poor and does not include a demonstrable assessment of each asset and its relationship with the landscape. In particular the Planning Archaeologist highlights that the setting of the Burial Mounds on the ridge to south of the site will clearly be compromised.

5.4 The Isle of Wight Council Public Rights of Way Officer comments that since the maximum height of the wind turbines would not exceed 100 metres, none of the Public Rights of Way

are within a "fall-over" distance. Also the Public Bridleway is further away from the wind turbines than the 200 metres of separation recommended by the British Horse Society. The Officer suggests that should the application be approved, a condition is required to ensure that any boundary structures should not encroach upon and/or adversely affect the amenity of the Public Rights of Way.

5.5 Isle of Wight Council's Environmental Health Officer comments that the applicant's noise impact assessment uses methodology recommended in the ETSU-R-97 report, which is the government recommended method for assessment of such developments. The Environmental Statement reports that the noise emissions from the turbines, as experienced at noise sensitive receptors (dwellings), would not exceed the ETSU-R-97 criteria. It is noted that the anticipated noise levels have been predicated on the use of a particular make and model of turbine, thus should the application be approved, a noise limit condition based on levels assessed in this application would need to be applied.

Potential shadow flicker impacts could be controlled through a mitigation measures imposed through a condition.

In terms of low frequency noise (including 'infrasound') or ground-borne vibration, the Environmental Health Officer comments that there is currently no robust evidence that low frequency noise from wind farms has adverse impacts on wind farm neighbours in this regard.

Noise, vibration and dust during the construction phase can be controlled by powers available under Environmental Health legislation, although a condition requiring agreement of an Environmental Management Plan to control this would be required should the application be approved.

5.6 The Local Highway Authority has assessed the proposed route for construction traffic associated with the proposed development and raises no objection to the application. The imposition of conditions are requested in the event of a recommendation for approval, which are referred to more specifically within the evaluation section of the report.

External Consultees

5.7 *The Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership* objects to the development on the basis that the five wind turbines would have a significant negative impact on the AONB and its setting. In particular the AONB Partnership note several key visual receptors which would be adversely impacted by the proposal, including; Tennyson Down, Newtown National Nature Reserve, Five Barrows and the stretch of chalk ridge from Shalcombe Down to Afton Down, and the Island's northern coastline. This is contrary to development plan documents, national planning guidance and the objectives of the AONB designation.

5.8 *Cable and Wireless* has no objection to the proposed development.

5.9 *DEFRA* comment that as the site is under 20 ha it falls below the threshold for consultation with DEFRA. From assessment of the ES the land is graded at 3B and therefore falls outside the definition of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

5.10 *The Environment Agency* has no objection to the proposed development.

5.11 *Natural England* consider that the proposal is likely to lead to the displacement of some golden plover from the site, however this would be unlikely to lead to an impact on the overall population. The turbines are sufficiently distant from hedgerow features and woodland such that the development is unlikely to have an impact on bat populations.

These views are subject to conditions requiring a programme of bird and bat monitoring, and the timing of construction works should the application be approved.

5.12 Natural England conclude that the development is unlikely to have a significant impact on the interest features of the Solent & Southampton Waters SPA / Ramsar, Isle of Wight Downs (SAC), or the Prospect Quarry, Compton Down, Yar Estuary and Newtown Harbour SSSI's.

5.13 Natural England also comment that the proposal is likely to have an impact on certain views in from the Isle of Wight AONB, although do not formally object to the application on this basis.

5.14 *English Heritage* consider that the effect of the proposed turbines on Five Barrows and the other Scheduled Monuments along the chalk ridge would be moderate/major and adverse and the visual relationship between these monuments would be adversely affected by the incongruous and intrusive massing and movement represented by a group of turbines. The effects on the highly-graded buildings at Thorley Manor including the remains of St Swithin's church have been understated; they would be at least 'moderate adverse'. The effect on the complex of heritage assets at Newtown would also be moderate adverse. These adverse consequences of the application must be weighed by the Local Planning Authority against the suggested public benefits. English Heritage considers that such harm would considerably outweigh the public benefit involved and recommend that this application be refused.

5.15 *The Garden History Society* does not wish to comment on the proposal.

5.16 *Ministry of Defence* has no objection to the proposal.

5.17 *National Air Traffic Services (NATS)* has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

5.18 *New Forest District Council* does not wish to comment on this application.

5.19 *New Forest National Park Authority* comments that photomontages should be prepared of views from the National Park to allow assessment of the proposal.

5.20 *OFCOM* has no comments to make.

5.21 *Southern Water* comment that the Environment Agency should comment on the use of a private water treatment plant and advises on the use of SUDS.

5.22 *Southern Gas Networks* provide an informative of a low / medium / intermediate pressure gas main in the vicinity of the site and advises that the position of this should be confirmed using hand dug trial holes.

5.23 *Civil Aviation Authority* advises that Southampton and Birmingham Airports are consulted.

Parish/Town Council Comments

5.24 *Shalfleet Parish Council* strongly object to the proposal on the following grounds that are summarised below;

- The development would not be sympathetic to local features and landforms.
- Noise, vibration and flicker would have an adverse impact on nearby residents.
- Site traffic would have an adverse impact on local roads causing inconvenience, dust, noise and road damage.
- Little change from the application previously refused planning permission.

- Loss of agricultural land.
- Adverse impact on local groundwater resources.
- Adverse impact on health of local residents
- Loss of house sales.
- Proximity to residential properties, which is 2km in Scotland.
- Impact on tourism.
- Detrimental impact on wildlife (badgers / bats / birds).
- The site lies between two AONB areas.

5.25 *Yarmouth Town Council* object to the proposal on the following grounds that are summarised below :

- Adverse impact on Thorley residents from noise and shadow flicker, the buffer distance in Scotland is 2 km.
- Adverse impact on the tranquillity of Thorley and the Thorley Church.
- The setting of historic buildings in the area will be irrevocably damaged by the intrusion of the turbines.
- Impact on local roads during the construction period.
- Broad Lane is inappropriate for access to the site.
- No details of the grid connection.
- Adverse impact on pedestrians since Wellow and Thorley have no footpaths.
- Increase risk of flooding from surface water.
- Adverse impact on the Rights of Way network.
- Adverse visual impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in particular Compton Down, Brighstone Down and Tennyson Down.
- Adverse visual impact on the Yar Estuary.
- Adverse visual impact on the seascape from Yarmouth / Lymington.
- The Countryside should be protected in line with the Core Strategy and NPPF policies.
- Adverse impact on the local economy from loss of tourism.
- Adverse impact on bird populations.
- Adverse impact on badger populations.

Third Party Representations

5.26 The Isle of Wight Council received the Vectis Wind Farm planning application on 25 March 2009. The original consultation process began on 15 July 2011 and ended on 5 August 2011 which is the period when publicity took place, such as site notices and letters sent to statutory consultees. Following the receipt of supplementary information under Regulation 22 of the EIA Regulations 2011, a further period of consultation took place beginning on 9 March 2012 ending on 30 March 2012. The paragraphs below summarise the responses which were received during both these consultation periods.

5.27 *Arqiva* object to the siting of turbines 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the grounds that they could interfere with Arqiva's microwave links from Rowridge for BBC DAB and Classic FM.

5.28 *BAA Airports (Southampton Airport)* comment that the application does not conflict with safeguarding criteria and have no objection to the proposal.

5.29 *Badger Trust Isle of Wight* comment that there is an active badger activity close to the junction of Thorley Street and Broad Lane close to where the junction improvements are proposed. Therefore a new independent badger survey should be undertaken.

5.30 *Bournemouth Airport* comment that the proposal does not conflict with safeguarding criteria and has no objection to the proposal.

5.31 *Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)* object to the proposal on the following grounds;

- Scale and height of the turbines would have an adverse effect on the designated landscape, coast and estuaries which outweighs the renewable energy production benefits.
- Damage to the setting of listed buildings, in particular Old St Swithin's Church, Thorley.
- Lattice tower is not in harmony with the wind turbines and would be visually intrusive.
- Permanent access and crane pads are an intrusion onto agricultural land.
- Hard surfacing would exacerbate flooding at Wellow and Thorley Street.
- Limited short term economic benefits during construction, and unknown impacts on the tourist industry (walkers, cyclists, horse riders, hang-gliders and accommodation providers).
- Adverse impact on the local road network during construction.
- Adverse impact on neighbouring properties from noise, shadow flicker, tv reception and mobile phone signals.
- May set a precedent for other such developments.
- Cabling should be underground.
- Limited contribution to electricity generation, offset by energy consumption during construction and decommissioning.

5.32 *The Footprint Trust* considers that there are no strong environmental, economic or social reasons why this small wind farm should not be approved. There is no firm evidence that this proposal would harm tourism, devalue housing or damage wildlife. The Council should back this proposal as a positive statement towards its Eco-Island vision.

5.33 *Isle of Wight Friends of the Earth* support the proposal as it would assist in meeting obligations for renewable energy production, is outside the AONB and would be viewed in association with other structures.

5.34 *Isle of Wight Ramblers* consider that the development would have a detrimental impact on the landscape, in particular views from Afton Down, Tapnell Down and the northern coastal paths / Hampstead Trail. Concern is also expressed to the loss of tranquillity and the impact on tourism and the local economy. Additional comments regarding the proximity of the turbines (100 metres) from footpath S18 and S34, leading to overbearing impact to walkers and possible ice throw.

5.35 *Isle of Wight Society* express concern that the means of grid connection is not specified. All construction material should be removed on decommissioning. Concern is expressed about the proximity to neighbouring properties, the visual impact on the AONB and impact on users of rights of way. A performance condition should be imposed.

5.36 *Joint Radio Company Limited* (on behalf of UK Fuel and Power Industry) cannot foresee any problems with radio link infrastructure operated by Scottish and Southern Energy and Southern Gas Networks.

5.37 The *National Trust* comments that the application remains harmful to the public enjoyment of landscapes within the AONB owned by the National Trust and the previous reasons for refusal (1, 2 and 3) still apply.

5.38 The *RSPB* object to the proposal as there is insufficient evidence to correctly evaluate the potential impact on golden plover populations, a qualifying assemblage of the Solent and Southampton Waters SPA.

5.39 *ThWART* object to the development on the following grounds that are summarised below;

- The proposal is contrary to local and national planning policies.
- The reasons for refusing the previous development proposal have not been mitigated or addressed, indeed worsens some issues.
- The design of the structures, in terms of scale, height and mass are out of keeping with their surroundings.
- The development would have an adverse visual impact on the landscape and AONB, and the reasons for refusing the previous scheme still apply.
- The proposal would have an adverse impact on residential amenity.
- Adverse impact on listed buildings and conservation areas, particularly Church of St Swithin, Thorley Manor, Yarmouth Mill, Yarmouth Conservation Area and Newtown Hall / Conservation Area.
- Adverse impact for users of public rights of way in the immediate area and on local trails (Tennyson & Hamstead Trails.)
- Adverse impact on the tourist trade and loss of revenue.
- The noise modelling methodology is flawed and the development would not meet the requirements of ETSU-R-97 and would result in noise intrusion to the two nearest properties.
- The traffic assessment uses of date data therefore there is no evidence to support its conclusions.
- There is no assessment of the historical significance of Broad Lane.

5.40 *Wildlife Concern Isle of Wight* consider that there is a concern for wildlife and that surveys for birds, bats and badgers should be undertaken.

5.41 *Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners* object to the proposal on grounds that surface water run off from into Thorley Brook and then the River Yar may exacerbate flooding in the area and also possibly increase deposition in the river.

5.42 *The Yarmouth Society* considers that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the historical character of Yarmouth and its rural environment.

5.43 *Yarmouth Town Trust* considers that the proposal would have an adverse visual impact on the historic town of Yarmouth and its listed buildings, as well as the adjacent Heritage Coast.

5.44 There has been a total of 2,109 letters of representation received from ***third parties*****.** Of this total 836 state an objection to the application, of which 696 were received as part of the original consultation and 140 following the re-advertisement following the receipt of supplementary information.

5.45 1274 letters have been received in support of the proposal, of which 807 were received as part of the original consultation and 467 in response to the re-advertisement following the receipt of supplementary information. Members should note that of these supporting letters 978 are in the form of a "pro forma" letter supporting the proposal on the basis that wind farms; are an essential form of renewable energy which will play a vital role in reducing the country's carbon footprint, are in line with the Eco Island objectives, would utilise a local research facility at Vestas providing an opportunity for field testing and assisting local employment, would not be detrimental to the landscape, and would not affect enjoyment of the countryside. A further 59 representations were received as a supporting postcard, which includes space for the individual to make bespoke comments.

5.46 A petition containing 554 signatures taken at the Bestival 2011 has been submitted which supports the proposal with the key issue being that the signatories would still return to the Island should there be a wind farm.

5.47 The following represents a summary of the comments received. Whilst it is not the full text, it represents the key points that have been expressed regarding this proposal.

Support:

- The site is located where there is suitable wind velocity.
- Wind turbines are an appropriate and reliable technology for non-polluting power, providing electricity which is clean, safe and affordable.
- The proposal would assist in achieving climate change objectives and reducing sea level rises.
- The scheme would make a valuable contribution towards the reduction in the Island's carbon footprint through providing renewable energy and would promote the Council's "Eco Island" ambitions moving away from fossil fuels and nuclear which have more impact on the environment.
- Wind turbines would have minimal visual or auditory disturbance to the environment and are below background noise.
- The application site is outside protected areas (AONB and SSSI's).
- The turbines are iconic and would not have a detrimental impact in the landscape which already contains tall masts and buildings which are accepted. Visual impact highly subjective, visible does not mean intrusive.
- No evidence that tourism is affected in other parts of the UK / other countries which have wind turbines and would not stop visitors coming to the Island.
- The development would not have any adverse impact on views from the Mainland.
- Would assist in providing local jobs, investment and research and development.
- A local wind farm would provide Vestas with a local test site.
- The proposal would have limited impact on wildlife, and the sensitive siting does not lead to adverse impact on bird populations.
- Construction traffic is a short term impact when weighed against the long term benefits.
- Would assist in improving air quality through reducing emissions.

Object:

- The proposal would have an adverse noise impact on local residents and the tranquillity of the countryside.
- The proposal would have an adverse visual impact on the landscape (including the AONB, Heritage Coast), as well as views from the sea.
- The proximity to residential properties would result in a loss of amenity.
- The development (including access roads and crane pads) is out of keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area characterised by farming activities.
- The development would have an adverse impact on ecology and the nearby designated sites (SAC, SSSI's and SINC's) as well as wildlife including; badgers, red squirrels, hares, bats, bird species and local flora and fauna.
- The proposal is an inefficient means of renewable energy production and contributes little to electricity supply.
- There are concerns with decommissioning and a restoration bond should be required to be deposited.
- Impact upon television reception and telecommunications signals.
- Adverse impact on heritage assets and their setting (archaeological heritage, listed buildings and historic parks and garden).
- Adverse impact upon amenities for users of existing public rights of way in the area (walkers, cyclists and horse riders).
- Impact upon pubic health, especially from infrasound and vibration and potential collapse / structural failure resulting in fire and debris.

- Shadow flicker and reflective light from the turbine blades would affect neighbouring properties.
- Potential flooding from surface water runoff.
- Adverse impact on groundwater and hydrology.
- Adverse impact upon tourism and the local economy, with minimal economic / socio-economic or community benefits.
- Increase in light pollution from construction and security lights and on turbines.
- The wind monitoring mast is too tall.
- Traffic implications on and damage to the local highway network from construction traffic.
- The access road is in vicinity of a main public sewer.
- There are limited details of the grid connection.
- A landscaped buffer should be provided.
- Loss of agricultural land.
- The proposal is contrary to national and local planning policy.
- Hazard to the safety of air traffic.
- Possible cumulative impact with other developments.
- The impacts of the scheme outweigh the benefits.
- Short period of time to assess the submitted information and respond.
- The reasons for refusing the previous application still apply.
- Poor consultation with the local community
- Contravention of the Human Right Convention 1998.
- There is a general advocation within many of the letters of objections for alternative forms of renewable energy (solar, tidal, offshore wind).

6. Evaluation

6.1 The planning application has been supported by an Environmental Statement (ES) which was prepared under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (note that these Regulations have now been replaced by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.

6.2 In September 2011 the Council issued a request under Regulation 22 of the 2011 EIA Regulations for the provision of further information to support the Environmental Statement. This request covered the following areas;

- heritage assets,
- landscape visual impact assessment,
- a rights of way plan,
- bird and bat data,
- highways,
- trees and hedgerows,
- shadow flicker,
- cumulative impact,
- community benefits.

6.3 The additional information was received from the applicant and this supplementary information was subsequently advertised for a further 21 day period in March 2012 to allow consultees and third parties the opportunity to comment on this supplementary information.

6.4 The LPA is of the view that the ES covers the main impacts which are associated with the proposed development, each of which is evaluated below.

Planning Policy and the Principle of Development

6.5 In order to tackle threat of climate change the Government considers that the development of renewable energy sources, alongside nuclear power and the development of carbon capture and storage, is vital to enable the UK to play its full part in international efforts to reduce the production of harmful greenhouse gases.

6.6 The Government has placed an obligation on all licensed electricity suppliers to provide an increasing proportion of their electricity to be generated from renewable sources, known as the Renewables Obligation, in order for the UK to meet a legally binding EU target (2009 Renewable Energy Directive) of obtaining 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 (Directive 2009/28/EC). The Renewables Obligation target level stands at 12.4% for the period April 2011 – March 2012, with the banding levels for the period 2013 – 2017 currently under review by the Government.

6.7 The Government's Renewable Energy Strategy suggests that by 2020 about 30% or more of our electricity, both centralised and small-scale generation, could come from renewable sources. Only around 6.7 % of the UK's electricity currently comes from renewable sources.

6.8 The Government has also published a Renewables Roadmap which sets out a comprehensive action plan to accelerate the UK's deployment and use of renewable energy, and put us on the path to achieve our 2020 target, while driving down the cost of renewable energy over time. This identifies eight technologies that have either the greatest potential to help the UK meet the 2020 target in a cost-effective and sustainable way, and this includes onshore wind.

6.9 These and other targets have been set as a response to tackling climate change, caused by an increase in carbon dioxide levels in the earth's atmosphere. A large proportion of the increased carbon dioxide release is due to the burning of fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources (such as wind, solar, hydro, tidal etc) are not finite and do not create or release carbon dioxide and offer a relatively secure and long term energy supply.

6.10 To conclude it is clear that there is strong national support for the use of renewable energy to assist in meeting the nation's electricity needs and help meet EU targets for the production of electricity from renewable sources to tackle climate change.

<u>Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations</u>

6.11 One of the Core Planning Principles set out in the NPPF is that planning should support the transition to a low carbon future, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example by the development of renewable energy).

6.12 Section 10 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change) continues at paragraph 93 that planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

6.13 The NPPF states at paragraph 98 that local planning authorities should approve the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should not ask applicants to demonstrate the need for energy (see paragraph 4.16 above)

6.14 Policy SP5 of the Island Plan states that a range of renewable energies will be encouraged across the Island to meet its target of up to 100 MW installed capacity as the on-shore contribution to becoming self-sufficient in renewable electricity production. The Council believes the renewable energy target can be met through contributions from a range of technologies, including at least 22.5 MW from wind. It is expected that large-scale wind and photovoltaic schemes will be located outside of the AONB.

6.15 The following table summarises the position with regards to renewable energy projects which are either operational or benefit from planning permission on the Island. A full breakdown of the renewable energy schemes is set out in Appendix A.

Operational Renewable Electricity Schemes

Technology	**Installed Capacity (MW)**
On-shore wind	0.0187
Solar PV	6.33835
Biomass	0.14
Waste Gasification	2.3
Hydro	0.0004
Landfill Gas	1.0
Domestic	5.427
Total	**15.225***

*rounded to 3 decimal places

Renewable Electricity Schemes With Planning Permission

Technology	**Capacity (MW)**
On-shore wind	1.846
Solar	21.785
Biomass	0.3
Tidal	0.5
Total	**24.431**

Total Operational and Consented Renewable Electricity Schemes

Technology	**Capacity (MW)**
On-shore wind	1.8647
Solar PV	28.12353
Biomass	0.44
Waste Gasification	2.3
Hydro	0.0004
Landfill Gas	1.0
Domestic	5.427
Hydro	0.5
Total	**39.656***

*rounded to 3 decimal places

6.16 From the table above Members will note that there are permitted and installed on-shore wind turbine developments with a capacity of 1.8647 MW of electricity. The proposed development could therefore provide a significant contribution of 12.5 MW towards the total of 22.5 MW contribution from on-shore wind developments, a significant proportion of this target.

6.17 The application site is situated outside of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The principle of the proposed development is therefore in accordance with the context of this strategic local planning policy.

6.18 A Windfarm Site Search Assessment (September 2008) was prepared by consultants (URS) to inform the renewables policies of the Island Plan Core Strategy. This report was a review of a number of previous reports on potential areas for wind farms and essentially was a review of the analysis used in the earlier reports and then also applied what are referred to as negative and positive filters. The former in effect are recognised constraints and the latter recognised benefits of the location. The consultant's conclusions identified three broad areas as suitable to accommodate wind turbines with capacities ranging from 4 to 12 MW, these are;

- Land to the south of Wellow (10 – 12 MW) for a community / commercial development;
- Land between Newport and Havenstreet (4 – 6 MW) for a community development;
- Land to the north-east of St Helens (4 – 6 MW) for a community development

6.19 The current planning application is within the south of Wellow area identified by the consultants. Members should note that this study is a desktop assessment which identified sites by identification of potential constraints. With specific reference to the South Wellow site, the Assessment concluded that there are no significant restrictions on this site, but a mote detailed assessment would be required through an EIA to support any planning application.

6.20 The Isle of Wight's Sustainable Community Strategy 'Eco-Island' 2008-2020 states *'The Island faces a particular environmental challenge. This is because our ecological footprint (the amount of resources and energy we use) is three times more than the amount we can sustain. We cannot keep using the amount of resources we currently consume. We must seize this opportunity to change the way we live and work on the Island, to safeguard it for future generations. The ISP [Island Strategic Partnership] wants the Island to have the lowest carbon footprint in England by 2020.'*

Summary of the Principle of Development.

6.21 The principle of utilising onshore wind energy is accepted in national and local planning policy guidance, and this application if found to be acceptable also offers the opportunity to contribute towards the Council's ambitious carbon reduction aspirations set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the 22.5 MW target for the production of electricity from wind technology set out in Policy SP6 of the Core Strategy. Therefore it is concluded that the principle of developing a facility providing 12.5 MW of renewable energy is acceptable, subject to detailed consideration of the potential impacts of the proposed development. Officers also advise that objections relating to the need and efficiency of the technology are not material to the determination of the application.

Visual Impact of the Development

The basis of consultation responses

6.22 A substantial number of objectors have raised concerns over the potential landscape visual impact of the proposed wind turbines. The AONB Partnership objects to the development on the basis that the development would have a significant negative impact on the AONB and its setting. Both Yarmouth and Shalfleet Parish Council also raise concerns about the impact on the landscape and AONB. Third parties, including the CPRE and ThWART have also objected to the proposal on visual impact grounds.

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations

6.23 When considering onshore wind energy developments particular attention must be given to potential landscape and visual impact effects on the natural, cultural and built environment and potential cumulative impacts with other developments. Thus whilst the principle of this development utilising onshore wind energy is accepted, it is therefore necessary to thoroughly examine the potential landscape visual impact and balance this against the benefits of renewable energy production.

6.24 National planning policy advice, as set out in more detail earlier, states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. In particular great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

6.25 Strategic policy SP5 of the Core Strategy supports proposals that protect, conserve and / or enhance the Island's natural environment and protect the integrity of international, national, and local designations. Policy DM2 requires development proposals to complement the character of the surrounding area, with Policy DM12 emphasising the need to protect the integrity of international, national and local designations relating to landscape and seascape. Policy DM16 specifically requires renewable energy development proposals to be informed by a landscape character assessment and to reflect the capacity and sensitivity of the landscape of the Island.

6.26 The previous planning application (P/01400/06) was refused for several reasons relating to the adverse visual impact of the development within the landscape including; detriment for; occupiers of residential properties in the locality, users of rights of way / open access land, the landscape character of the West Wight area (including Compton Down, Brighstone Down, Tennyson Down and the Yar and Newton Estuaries), the West Wight Area of the Isle of Wight AONB and the cumulative impact with the consented Cheverton Down scheme, as well as inadequate information to mitigate these impacts.

6.27 Members should note that the principle differences between that application and the current scheme are as follows;

- The 2006 scheme proposed six wind turbines compared with five for the current application;
- The siting for the previously proposed turbines was in a generally east – west orientated linear array, extending around 1 km further to the east.
- The tip height of the 2006 scheme was 109.5 metres (100 metres in the current proposal)
- A 100 metre buffer for footpaths and 300 metres for bridleways have been applied to the current proposal.
- Additional bat surveys have been undertaken in support of the application.

Relevant sections of the application

6.28 Chapter 5 of the applicant's Environmental Statement provides a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed development in terms of the likely significant effects upon existing landscape and visual receptors. The LVIA assessment concludes that there would be some significant effects within those areas closest to the project (typically within 2 - 3 km) although the landscape character areas have the capacity to accommodate the development without unacceptable effects. The LVIA notes that the AONB is some 820 metres at its closest point, it would not directly affect the landscape within the AONB and would not affect the overall integrity of the AONB or Heritage Coast. In summary the LVIA considers that the development would not, on balance, result in unacceptably adverse effects.

6.29 Members should note that the impact on the setting of heritage assets is considered in a separate section below.

Assessment of Visual Impact.

6.30 The Isle of Wight Council appointed a landscape consultant to assess the applicant's LVIA for the proposed wind turbines both in terms of the methodology used in the assessment and also to provide a critical review of its findings, which also included an independent assessment of the proposal, based on fieldwork.

Methodology

6.31 The consultant's review considers that the methodology used in the LVIA complies with the broad approach of the "*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2nd Edition (2002)*" published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (GLVIA). The submitted LVIA is essentially a sound technical assessment of the baseline, sufficient in its scope and identifies the principal impacts on the range of receptors in accordance with the EIA Regulations. Several areas of concern have been highlighted by the consultant, in particular the selection of viewpoints, and the refusal of the applicant to provide further viewpoints as part of the Regulation 22 request from the Local Planning Authority.

6.32 The consultant considers that the council should note that the criteria used at Table 5.1 (Magnitude of Change – Visual Receptors) is a comparatively insensitive or a 'blunter' method of assessment as compared with some methods, such as that recommended in the SNH 2002 best practice guidance, since four of nine categories have no definition. In addition, the degree of significance in Table 5.5 is ranked in an eleven-point scale for which no descriptive criteria are provided. The consultant suggests that this is excessively complex and as a result the meanings to the differences between the rankings largely opaque.

6.33 In terms of the scope of the assessment the consultant considers that the Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) have been prepared generally in accordance with industry standard methods and appear to be as reliable as they can reasonably be.

6.34 The visual impact assessment is considered to be adequate, however it is not comprehensive in its consideration of the effects upon visual receptors within settlements and using Public Rights of Way in the study area and there are several 'gaps' which, if filled, would have greatly assisted the transparency of the assessment. In particular, the consultant highlights that there is a relative paucity of viewpoints representing the closer public views as worst case scenarios, including from within the AONB in the vicinity of the River Yar and from the AONB ridgeline at its eastern limit within the ZTV. The consultant's assessment has thus not only used the viewpoints given within the ES, but used additional viewpoints which are considered to be representative of the deficiencies within the ES. The following are those additional viewpoints which the consultant has included in his assessment;

- Broad Lane
- Public Right of Way East of the Site
- Wilmingham Road (AONB)
- Harboro Barrow (AONB)
- Ferry at Yarmouth.
- Golden Hill Country Park
- Solent Way (National Park)
- Tanners Lane (National Park)

Summary of Methodology

6.35 In conclusion, Officers consider that the methodology of the submitted LVIA offers a reasonable basis for allowing the assessment of visual impacts. A further selection of LVIA viewpoints and their associated assessments would have been useful, in particular from viewpoints in closer proximity to the site, for example Broad Lane itself and the surrounding Rights of Way network as well as sites in the AONB. This identified deficiency within the ES has been addressed by the use of additional viewpoints undertaken by the Council's consultant.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6.36 The National Planning Policy Framework is clear great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in nationally recognised designations such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), which have the highest status of protection. In such areas planning applications should be refused for major developments except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that they are in the national interest. It is highlighted to Members that the application is located **outside** of the Isle of Wight AONB. However the AONB surrounds the site on three sides, therefore the impact of the proposal on views from and into this designated landscape must be given due consideration, in line with Policies SP5, DM12 and DM14 of the Core Strategy.

6.37 The Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2009 -2014 states that the primary purpose of [AONB] designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, which includes wildlife and cultural heritage, as well as scenery.

6.38 The AONB Partnership has objected to the proposal on the grounds that it fails to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and its setting, contrary to advice in the NPPF and the Core Strategy. The reasons given by the AONB Partnership in this regard are that the introduction of the turbines into this landscape would compromise the aims for which the West Wight Chalk Downs character area of the AONB was originally designated. The AONB Partnership is also concerned that the introduction of movement into an open panoramic landscape would affect its tranquillity and erode the unique sense of place which is part of its special quality. The AONB Partnership note several key visual receptors within the AONB which would be adversely impacted by the proposal including; Tennyson Down, Newtown National Nature Reserve, Five Barrows and the stretch of chalk ridge from Shalcombe Down to Afton Down, and the Island's northern coastline. In summary the AONB Partnership consider the impact of this proposed development would have a significant negative impact on the Isle of Wight AONB and is contrary to the aims of the AONB Management Plan.

6.39 In assessing the findings of the submitted LVIA, the consultant has made a general point that most of the findings of the impact assessment are not agreed with and it is considered that the magnitude of the effect to be undervalued in nearly all cases. It is also highlighted that the LVIA has not included a single visual impact affected to a *High* magnitude. As such the consultant's assessment of the magnitude and significance of change on the AONB differs from that of the applicant's, as discussed below.

6.40 The following tables has are included in the ES and have been copied here to assist Members with the terminology which has been used by the applicant in categorising visual impact;

Magnitude of Change – The Landscape Resource; (ES Table 5.3)

Magnitude of Effect	Example
High	Total loss of / very substantial alteration to key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline; ie pre-development landscape and / or introduction of elements totally uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape which would then give rise to a different characterising effect.
Medium	Partial loss of / moderate alteration to one or more key / elements / features / characteristics of the baseline; ie. pre-development landscape and / or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape but which could co-characterise parts of the landscape.
Low	Minor loss of / alteration to one or more of the key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline; ie pre-development landscape and / or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape or may not lead to a characterising or co-characterising effect.
Negligible	Very minor loss of / alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline; ie pre-development landscape and / or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape or which do not have any materially characterising effect – approximating with a "no-change" situation.

Landscape Resource Sensitivity (ES Table 5.4)

Resource	Rationale	Sensitivity
Nationally designated / valued countryside and landscape features; strong / distinctive landscape character; absence of landscape detractors.	Low tolerance to change.	High
Locally designated / valued landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.	Medium tolerance to change.	Medium
Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.	Low tolerance to change.	Low

Significance Matrix

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	**Medium**	**Low**
High	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate / Major
Medium to High	Major / Moderate	Moderate / Major	Moderate
Medium	Moderate / Major	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
Low to Medium	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor / Moderate
Low	Moderate /	Minor / Moderate	Minor

Magnitude	**Sensitivity**		
	Minor		
Negligible to Low	Minor / Moderate	Minor	Negligible / Minor
Negligible	Minor	Negligible / Minor	Negligible
None to Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	None

6.41 The LVIA assesses the impact on the Compton Down ridge as being of a *Medium to High* magnitude. Whereas the consultant considers the magnitude of effect to be *Very Large* such that the wind farm would be the dominant feature in the view. The consultant notes that although large areas of Compton Down would have a restricted or no view of the windfarm, due to the landform, all areas north from the ridgeline would have a significant visual impact which would substantially detract from the drama and natural beauty of the scene.

6.42 The stretch of the AONB to the east of Freshwater Bay is the quintessential Isle of Wight landscape offering exceptionally high value views, including from Tennyson's Monument a vast sweep to the south-east across to the cliffs of Compton Bay along the southern coast to St Catherine's Point and north-east over the River Yar, the Solent to the New Forest. The wind farm would be sited at the centre of this view and even though at some 5.7km would be highly discordant in the scene. The ES LVIA assesses the magnitude of impact as *Medium*; however, the consultant assesses the impact to be *Large*, where the turbines would be prominent, 'standing out, striking, sharp, unmistakable, easily seen'. The LVIA considers the impact to be significant and this is concurred with this, although it is concluded that a greater degree of significance should be attached to this effect than given in the LVIA.

6.43 Between Freshwater Bay and Yarmouth the AONB follows the valley of the River Yar. The consultant considers the viewpoint assessments for points 5 and 6 to be undervalued, *Low to Medium* and *Low* respectively in the LVIA, meaning that in both cases the LVIA does not consider the impacts to be significant. The consultant's assessment of the respective magnitude of effect would be *Large* and *Medium*, where in the case of the view from Yarmouth in particular the wind turbines would be conspicuous, being 'noticeable, distinct, catching the eye or attention, clearly visible and well defined' against the chalk ridge backdrop, despite the busy foreground. Therefore in both cases, given the high sensitivity of the receptors (residents, walkers etc), these impacts are considered to be significant.

6.44 The AONB landscape between the Yar and Wilmingham Road is gently undulating arable land with large woodland blocks, crossed by a number of Public Rights of Way. The LVIA does not provide a viewpoint from this area. The consultant estimates that parts of the towers and much of the blades would be seen above the immediate horizon line at distance of 1.6km, and assesses the magnitude to be *Large* and the impact significant.

6.45 East of Compton Down the chalk ridgeline joins the high rolling downland of the 'inner' Island downs. At Mottistone Down, Harboro is a site of prominent Tumuli, the 'summit' of an area Open Access Land and on the Tennyson Trail Coastal Path offering dramatic views west to Tennyson Down and along the coast. At Harboro, at a distance of 3.3km from the wind farm, the consultant considers the visual impact to be *Large* (magnitude) and significant.

6.46 Swainstondown Gate is set within the high central chalk downland area due east of the application site at a distance of 6.1km, with much of this area clothed in woodland and its character is much more enclosed compared with the open expanse of the chalk ridgeline along the coast. The LVIA assesses the impact to be *Low to Medium* and not significant, the consultant's assessment considers it would be a *Medium* magnitude impact and significant.

6.47 The AONB to the north, including Cranmore and Newtown, is lower lying and much is heavily wooded such that views out to the south are rare and public viewpoints to the wind

farm highly unlikely. From Newtown Harbour, however, the wind farm would be visible against the backdrop of the chalk downs at distances of around 5km. The estuary is visually a highly sensitive landscape, comprising the wide river, salt marshes and fringing woodlands and pastures. The lower sections of some of the turbines would be partially screened by woodland in the mid-distance but the blades would be seen to break skyline. The LVIA considers the effect to be *Low* and not significant, whereas the landscape consultant considers it to be *Medium* magnitude and significant.

Visual Impact from other viewpoints

6.48 The landscape consultant has highlighted that there are two other viewpoints outside of the immediate local area and the AONB which should be considered. Views from the Lymington-Yarmouth ferry are considered to be of high sensitivity due to the nature of many of the receptors, tourist / visitors arriving at or leaving the island. From a viewpoint on the ferry just outside of Yarmouth harbour at a distance of some 3.5km, the base of the turbines would be partially screened but the blades would all break the skyline backdrop of the chalk ridge and project above the roof line of Yarmouth although the busy nature of the foreground would provide some 'mitigation' of the effect. The LVIA assessed the impact to be *Medium* and not significant, although the consultant found this to be *Medium*, because of the built form in the foreground and degree of activity, but significant for high sensitivity receptors.

6.49 West of the River Yar AONB area the landform rises to around 50m AOD at Golden Hill Country Park, with a character formed by the broad and long distance eastern views across the Yar and AONB. From this location the turbines would be spread out along an intermediate ridge at around 3.9km distant and would break the skyline of the downs beyond. The landscape consultant assesses the impact from this location to be *Large* and significant.

6.50 From the New Forest National Park, the landscape consultant concurs with the LVIA in that views from inland areas of the New Forest would not be significantly affected. From the Solent Way at the Keyhaven & Pennington Marshes Nature Reserve and from the beach at Tanners Lane, east of Lymington (both some 7.5km distant), the turbines would be fully in view and would break the skyline of the chalk ridge. As such the consultant considers this would have a material effect on the character and quality of these sensitive views, and the effect is assessed to be *Medium* and significant.

Landscape Value

6.51 The AONB is a nationally designated landscape considered to be of *High* value, but with areas of *Exceptional* value, in particular the chalk ridge west of Freshwater Bay and the discreet area of Newton Harbour. Both of these areas exhibit especially high scenic values formed of positive characteristics and an almost complete absence of detracting features.

6.52 The National Park is also of *High* value, with sections of the coastline exhibiting *Exceptional* value, including the Keyhaven & Pennington Marshes.

6.53 The local landscape context of the application site is almost entirely 'boxed in' by the higher ground of the AONB and its open character, offering expansive views in most directions means that a key characteristic of it is its high value landscape setting, together with the high value scenic quality of the views across the Solent to the New Forest. The LVIA states that in itself the local landscape is not of special or *High* value, but it is in generally good condition, with several positive characteristics and provides an important function as a setting to the AONB, in particular the chalk ridgeline. The local landscape is considered to have a *Medium* landscape value.

Visual Sensitivity

6.54 The LVIA concludes that there would be a high degree of visual sensitivity across a local area, with significant visual effects extending up to 2-3km (i.e. for consideration in the planning balance) and medium effects up to a maximum of 5.7km. The landscape consultant does not agree with this assessment and takes issue with many of the individual viewpoint impact assessments. Such is the open nature of the landscape (and seascape) and its value, that it is concluded that the visual sensitivity of this landscape to wind farm development is high, within an area of up to 7.5km, within which high sensitive receptors, such as walkers and residents, would have the potential to be significantly affected.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

6.55 The consultant assesses the overall Landscape Character Sensitivity of the application site to be medium, with the Landscape Character Sensitivity of the AONB and National Park is high because of their strong distinctive characteristics and special aesthetic qualities.

Landscape Capacity

6.56 From the above paragraphs it is concluded that the Landscape Value is High to Exceptional and for the designated landscapes and Medium for the local landscape. The Visual Sensitivity is High across the whole area and the Landscape Character Sensitivity is High for the designated landscapes and Medium for the local landscape. Overall the landscape consultant concludes the local landscape to have a Medium to Low landscape capacity and the designated landscapes a Low capacity to absorb change. Given the significant scale of this wind farm proposal, the high values and sensitivities of much of the receiving landscape, especially its visual sensitivities, it is considered that the landscape overall has a very limited landscape capacity the development without significant effects.

Magnitude of Landscape Character Impacts

6.57 The submitted LVIA addresses the magnitude of landscape character effects through the concept of degrees of change towards a *'wind farm landscape'*, where a total change in landscape character in this way would be a *High* magnitude effect. The LVIA considers that an area close to the wind farm would be changed to a *'wind farm landscape'*, which is an area around 750 metres from the outermost turbine, or an area roughly 2 km in diameter, but that this would be accommodated without an *"unacceptable effect*. Beyond this area a *'landscape with wind farm sub-type*' would be created, this would extend to 1.5km to include Compton Down in the AONB to the south, Dodpits Lane 2km to the east, Wellow/Thorley 1kmto the north and Wilmingham Road and the edge of the AONB 1.5km to the west. The landscape character impact would be of a *Medium* magnitude, where there would be a moderate alteration to the landscape characteristics, and of *Moderate/Major* significance. Beyond this 1-2km radius the magnitude of effect would be less than *Medium* and, therefore, would not give rise to a landscape character significant effect.

6.58 The landscape consultant agrees with the LVIA approach of identifying a *'wind farm landscape'* character type. This is considered to extend to an area of around 750m from the outermost turbine, and would include the edge of Wellow and Thorley, as a roughly circular area of 2km in diameter. The consultant considers that the magnitude of change to this landscape would be *High* representing a very substantial alteration where the turbines would become the dominant characteristic; this impact would be significant.

6.59 The consultant broadly concurs with the LVIA's findings in respect of the areas from where the creation of the *'landscape with wind farm sub-type'* would be perceived, extending the area in some directions. The distinct ridge of Compton Down cuts off the effect to the south to a limit of around 2.5km in each direction along the ridge. To the east, at 2km, Dodpits

Lane is about the limit of this impact and to the north the effect extends beyond Wellow and Thorley, up onto the slightly higher ground to around 1.5km. Whilst to the west the impact extends into the AONB beyond Wilmingham Road to a minor ridgeline at around 2km. The magnitude of change on this area is assessed to be *Medium to High* where although there would not be a total or substantial alteration to key elements of character, the introduction of highly prominent, large scale elements, would be substantially uncharacteristic and capable in some circumstances of giving rise to a different characterising effect. This degree of impact would be significant for the high sensitivity landscape resources, i.e. the AONB to the west and south. The LVIA states that the impact on part of the AONB would be significant and concludes that because *"a few of its key characteristics would only be partly affected it is considered that this landscape character area* (i.e. Compton Down) *has the capacity to accommodate this change without an unacceptable effect upon its landscape character….."*. The consultant concurs with this view. (Members are at this point advised to cross refer to paragraph 6.69 below for further officer comment upon the extent of these two zones.)

6.60 Beyond this range the wind farm would be seen as an object within the landscape, prominent but not dominating or changing overall characteristics. The *Exceptional* quality landscapes of Tennyson Down and Newtown Harbour are, however, especially sensitive to change and very highly valued; these are areas are consequently sensitive to even minor changes to them or their settings. The consultant considers that these are special cases on which the impacts whilst not substantial in magnitude would be significant.

Cumulative Impact

6.61 The main cumulative impact issue for the proposal are, at this time;

- Cheverton Down Wind Farm (extant permission for 3 turbines measuring 52.5m to blade tip on a 30m tower)
- A single turbine on land to the west of Betty Haunt Lane, Newport (hub height of 55 m and tip of 81 metres),
- Land to the north-west of Parkhurst Prison, Newport (2 turbines with a hub height of 125 m to tip)
- West of Wight Offshore Wind Project is at pre-application stage with an application anticipated in 2013

Other wind turbine proposals are either considered to be either too far away, or too small to have a significant cumulative impact with this proposal.

6.62 The council's landscape consultant has concluded that the cumulative effect of the proposal with other wind farms, permitted or in planning, is not considered to be significant. Only in the case of a single route, the Tennyson Trail, could there be a significant sequential impact depending on which wind farms were to come forward.

Visual Impact on Residential Properties

6.63 It is generally accepted practice that for the visual harm to residential properties to be significant, the impact of the development has to be overbearing, rendering the property an unattractive place to live.

6.64 The LVIA identifies a number of properties where the impacts would be significant, and the landscape consultant concurs with this list. The closest property to the proposed development is Hartshole Cottage at Wellow, which would be around 550m from the nearest turbine. An assessment of the likely impacts has been made from the garden area of this dwelling, although internal views from windows within the property were not undertaken. The property is laid out over three storeys, with the entrance and main living accommodation at ground floor, a floor above and a lower ground floor set down into its sloped garden. It is on

land higher than other properties in Wellow and surrounded on virtually all sides by open countryside. However, it is contained to the west, south and east by a 2m high deciduous hedge which prevent open views out to this countryside from the lower ground floor and to a large extent from the ground floor windows on the south-west facade (i.e. towards the wind farm). The windows for the first floor at located on the south-east façade offering open views to the chalk ridge and oblique views to the turbines. There are also currently no clear views out of the garden due to the hedge. The presence of the hedge means that the turbines, whilst just visible over and, in winter, partially through the hedge, means the impact would be substantial, with views of some parts of the turbines from ground floor living accommodation and first floor rooms (probably bedrooms). The consultant concludes that the wind farm would not be wholly overbearing on views out of the property as a whole.

6.65 Dog Kennel Cottage is sited west of Broad Lane, some 540m from the nearest turbine. This house is set some 10m or so below the level of Broad Lane, which runs along the top of a minor ridgeline between Dog Kennel Cottage and the wind farm. The council's consultant considers that the turbines would be almost completely screened by the intervening landform. In any case, the property has few windows on the facing façade, it being much more orientated to westerly and southerly views. For these reasons the consultant concludes that the visual impact would be negligible.

6.66 The consultant does not consider the visual impact to be overbearing on any of the other properties, all of which are more distant from the turbines than Hartshole Cottage. Although the consultant concludes that the landscape and visual impact of the windfarm development would be significantly harmful to the local landscape and the range of visual receptor's within it, including public rights of way and nearby residential settlements, and should be considered as a reason for refusing the planning application. Officers advise that the local planning authority should reach its own view on the significance of potential impact upon this property.

6.67 The applicant has prepared a response to the council's landscape consultant's report which considers that the selected viewpoint locations represent a good distribution within the study area to allow a thorough assessment of the effects. Infinergy note that the assessment of effects is largely a matter of professional opinion and consider that the levels applied in the ES are accurate and robust, and highlight that the Council should note that the magnitude of effects appears to have been overestimated by Enplan. The applicant concludes that each of the landscape character areas has the capacity to accommodate the changes arising from the windfarm without unacceptable effects upon their inherent landscape character and would not affect the overall integrity of the AONB.

Officer assessment of visual impact considerations

Landscape Character

6.68 Officers have assessed the landscape and visual impact of the development informed by both the applicant's LVIA and the council's consultant's conclusions. It is considered that it would have been useful to have some additional viewpoints contained within the LVIA, as requested in the Regulation 22 request, and Members should note that the viewpoints as used were not agreed with Planning Officers. In particular, it is highlighted to Members that the LVIA is based upon these viewpoints, and thus other viewpoints, such as closer perspectives within Broad Lane and the local rights of way network are not therefore given the same rigorous assessment as the LVIA selected viewpoints.

6.69 Officers considered that it is useful to review the work of its consultant which identifies the landscape character sub-types which would be likely to result should the windfarm be constructed; ie. a *"Windfarm Landscape*" and a "*Windfarm Character Subtype*".

6.70 As a general observation the landscape character of the Island is extremely diverse reflecting changes to local topography based upon the geological origins of the Island and that these changes become apparent over very short distances. The AONB management plan captures this point well in indicating that the Island shows examples of all landscape elements and features of lowland England in one small geographic area. The AONB itself as an example comprises 5 separate land parcels rather than the one or two more continuous areas found in other AONBs. The AONB therefore has 11 recognised landscape character types each of which has its own characteristics'. This diversity of landscape types makes the identification of the "*wind farm character subtype*" more difficult to define in absolute terms. Whilst both the applicants and the Councils consultant have attempted to define these zones it is important to recognise that the precise extent of these zones may vary both in terms of different peoples perspective as to the significance of change and to the very local subtleties of land levels and vegetation patterns. Officers have therefore undertaken further site visits to help inform this position and to inform the recommendation to members.

6.71 The council's landscape consultant identified the "Windfarm Landscape" to be an area of around 750 metres from the outermost turbine, or an area roughly 2 km in diameter. Officers concur with this conclusion, and this area is shown as Appendix B attached to the report. Members will note that this area covers a number of residential properties in Wellow, and properties on the southern edge of Main Road, Thorley are on the edge of this area which is considered to form a Windfarm Landscape. The potential impact on residential amenity is discussed below.

6.72 Within the Windfarm Landscape zone, close-up views of the wind turbines and associated infrastructure would be gained. The local landscape within which the development would sit is characterised by large open fields where hedges have been removed to allow modern farming practices. Thus to some degree the landscape has been subject to past change.

6.73 Beyond this area the consultant identifies that a landscape of '*Windfarm Character Subtype'* would be created within a radius of 2.5 km from the site. Giving consideration to the local landform, the consultant considers that this area would extend to 1.5km to include Compton Down in the AONB to the south, Dodpits Lane 2km to the east, Wellow/Thorley 1kmto the north and Wilmingham Road and the edge of the AONB 1.5km to the west. Officers have reviewed these conclusions and concur with the consultants conclusions in terms of the southern, eastern and northern boundaries to this area, however due to views from the west towards the site being severely restricted by Wilmingham Plantation, this would bring the western boundary of the Windfarm Character Subtype in to the eastern boundary of the plantation. This area is also shown on the plan attached as Appendix B.

AONB

6.74 Members will note that the southern part of the Windfarm Character Subtype area includes a 3.5 km stretch of the chalk ridge from Afton Down to Five Barrows, which is within the AONB. From an assessment of this area, the Tennyson Trail, a long distance public right of way, runs east - west along the top of the chalk ridge, with footpath S19 running north-south from the ridge towards the application site. When walking along the Tennyson Trail, it is noted that the eye would mainly be focussed in the direction of travel (ie east – west), however uninterrupted views are afforded from the ridge to the north towards the Solent and the mainland. These views would be significantly altered by the introduction of a windfarm at a distance of around 1.5 km as part of this Windfarm Character Subtype. Officers concur with the views of the AONB Partnership and the Council's consultant, in that the development would have a significant adverse visual impact from these viewpoints within the designated Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

6.75 Outside of this 2.5 km Windfarm Character Subtype Zone, the council's landscape consultant identifies two other viewpoints within the AONB where significant visual harm would be experienced, these being Tennyson Down and Newtown National Nature Reserve. Officers have assessed the impact from Tennyson Down and confirm that views to the site would be experienced by users of the Tennyson Trail when travelling a 1.8 km section of this route in an easterly direction from Tennyson Monument to Watcombe Bay, from distances of between 4.2 and 6.0 km. The view from the eastern slope of Tennyson Down is an iconic viewpoint in the AONB, with long distance easterly views taking in Compton Bay and the Island's south-western coastline, through Compton Down, the central plain and the Yar Estuary. When travelling in an easterly direction the windfarm would be directly in the receptor's eye line for a substantial distance of travel. For these reasons Officers concur that the development would have a significant adverse visual impact from the Tennyson Down area of the AONB. It should also be noted that the footpaths within these parts of the AONB are very heavily used by walkers, horse-riders and cyclists. The footpaths along the Tennyson Down and along the Tennyson Trail feature as a major element of the Walk the Wight annual walking event, the section of path running from the Needles up to Tennyson monument and then descending to Freshwater Bay features in several popular off road running races and parts of the Tennyson trail feature in the Island Adventure races. Therefore there are a significant number of potential sensitive receptors (ramblers, cyclists, horse-riders, tourists) that would be impacted by the introduction of this proposal.

6.76 The proposal would therefore be contrary to the following policies of the Core strategy.

i) Policy DM2 in that the mass and location (and therefore the dominance) of the group of turbines would not complement the character of the surrounding area particularly the AONB.
ii) Does not optimise the potential of the site with appropriate regard to existing constraints resulting from the close location to the AONB which is a protected landscape important in terms of its overall landscape, topography, views and special features to contribute to the character of the AONB.
iii) Cannot provide appropriate mitigation landscaping in order to overcome the impact upon the special character of the AONB.
iv) Policy DM12 the proposal by virtue of the size and overall grouping of the turbines and their relationship with surrounding landscape and in particular those parts of the AONB described above does not conserve, enhance and promote the landscape of the Island.
v) Policy DM16 in that the Environmental capacity of the area between the turbines which falls outside of the AONB and the environmental capacity and sensitivity of the AONB due to topography and its special character is not capable of preventing substantial harm to the integrity of the AONB.

6.77 The Newtown National Nature Reserve is a low lying estuary location approximately 5 km to the north-east of the application. As referred to above its landscape character is completely different from other parts of the AONB. From public access viewpoints along footpaths at just above sea level in this area, Officers note that medium range views could be gained of the upper sections of the turbines, although views from some areas would be obscured by vegetation. It is considered that when inside the Newtown Estuary views are largely focussed on the harbour area and on towards the Solent. Whilst there would be some views of the turbines, Officers consider that these would be not be prominent in the harbour vistas and thus the windfarm would not be significantly harmful to the Isle of Wight AONB landscape character in this location.

Thorley and Wellow

6.78 The settlements of Thorley and Wellow are situated to the north of the proposed windfarm at a distance of around 750 metres from the northernmost turbines (1 and 3) and on the edge

of identified Windfarm Landscape zone. The closest property to the development is Hartshole Cottage, Wellow at a distance of approximately 510 metres from Turbine 3. The council's landscape consultant concluded that whilst this property would experience a significant visual impact, it would not suffer an overbearing impact. This property is a detached house over 3 storeys orientated approximately northeast – southwest. Officers have gained access to this cottage and confirm that views to the turbines would be gained from first floor bedroom windows and ground floor kitchen / dining room windows. The dwelling is dug into the ground to the south-west and surrounded by a substantial hedge, restricting views from the basement level. Officers consider that the local landscape character enjoyed by occupiers of this dwelling would change dramatically, such that substantial harm would be experienced from the proposed development due to its siting, scale and dominance.

6.79 The proposal would therefore be contrary to the following policies of the Core strategy.

i) Policy DM2 in that the mass and location of the turbines and in particular the two closest to this property (3 and 4) would not provide an attractive environment for the occupiers of the property.
ii) Does not optimise the potential of the site with appropriate regard to the location of the adjacent residential building.
iii) Cannot provide appropriate mitigation landscaping in order to provide an attractive setting that integrates with the surroundings
iv) Policy DM12 the proposal by virtue of the size of the turbines and their relationship with surrounding landscape and properties such as Hartshole cottage does not conserve, enhance and promote the landscape of the Island
vi) Policy DM16 in that the Environmental capacity of the area to the north of proposed turbines numbers 3 and 4 due to its close proximity and land levels in insufficient to prevent substantial harm to the occupiers of the property from a number of its principal rooms.

6.80 From an inspection of residential properties in Main Road, Thorley / Wellow, Officers note that the pattern of development in the area is largely in a ribbon form along this highway. Dwellings on the northern side of Main Road front onto this road, with private amenity areas to the rear. There is soft landscaping to many of the frontages, and Officers consider that the impact on the outlook for occupiers of these properties, having a main northerly aspect, would not be significant to warrant a recommendation for the refusal of planning permission. However, there are a number of dwellinghouses on the southern side of Main Road, which have rear private amenity areas enjoying a southerly aspect towards Compton Down (namely; 1 – 16 North View, Rosebank, Flowerburn Cottage, Wellow House and Teazle Cottage) as well as from the public open space of Wellow Millennium Green. These dwellings range from 600 – 900 metres from the northernmost of the proposed turbines (1 and 3). Due to their principal southerly aspect and proximity to the turbines, Officers consider that occupiers of these dwelling would experience substantial harm from the proposed development due to its siting, scale and dominance within the local landscape in this location.

6.81 The proposal would therefore be contrary to the following policies of the Core strategy.

i) Policy DM2 in that the mass and location (and therefore the dominance) of the turbines and in particular the two closest to these properties (one and three) would not provide an attractive environment for the occupiers of the property
ii) Does not optimise the potential of the site with appropriate regard to the location of the adjacent residential properties
iii) Cannot provide appropriate mitigation landscaping in order to provide an attractive setting that integrates with the surroundings

iv) Policy DM12 the proposal by virtue of the size of the turbines and their relationship with surrounding landscape and properties does not conserve, enhance and promote the landscape of the Island

v) Policy DM16 in that the Environmental capacity of the area between turbines numbers 1 and 3 and the properties identified above due to topography is insufficient to prevent substantial harm to the occupiers of these properties.

6.82 Dog Kennel Cottage is a detached house situated on the western side of Broad Lane, approximately 540 metres to the west of Turbine 1. The council's landscape consultant concluded that the visual impact for occupiers of this dwelling would be negligible. Officers note that this property is situated in a hollow approximately 5 metres below the level of Broad Lane. Views from this dwelling are focused in a north-westerly direction towards the Yar Estuary. For these reasons Officers concur that the visual impact of the development on the amenities for occupiers of this dwelling would be minimal.

6.83 In addition, there are a number of Public Rights of Way (highways, footpaths and bridleways) which cross the zone which has been identified as a Windfarm Landscape. Officers consider that undoubtedly, users of these PROW's would experience some form of visual impact from the proposed windfarm. Whilst some users may find this development does not harm their enjoyment of the area and may provide a point of interest and draw people to the area to see the turbines close up, whilst others may find the development intrusive and avoid the paths. Other than the PROW's within the AONB referred to earlier in the report, these local rights of way are not within a designated landscape and thus are not afforded the same degree of protection. Thus Officers consider that there would be some visual harm to the users of the local Rights of Way network (within 750 metres of the windfarm), although this should not be afforded as much weight as the routes through the designated landscape of the AONB (and see in particular paragraph 6.75 above).

Other Locations

6.84 From viewpoints in Yarmouth and the Yar Estuary area, Officers consider that views to the application site from distances of about 3 km, would be distracted by activity in the harbour / estuary and through the vertical punctuation of views with the masts of yachts. In addition these viewpoints are relatively low lying and would be afforded a degree of natural screening of the site from vegetation and a low ridge around Wilmingham Road. Likewise for travellers arriving at / leaving Yarmouth by ferry, whilst the turbines would be visible in the rural backdrop to Yarmouth, this would amount to a pocket in the vista, which is largely taking by activity in the harbour / town area in the foreground. Thus the visual impact on this area is not considered to be significant.

6.85 Headon Warren is an elevated headland area to the west of Totland and within the AONB. Officers note that views of the turbines could be achieved over a distance of around 7 km, however such views are restricted to some extent by local vegetation on Headon Warren and its undulating topography. When in this area vistas are mainly to the north across the Solent and west towards Alum Bay and the Solent. Thus the visual impact on this area is not considered to be significant.

6.86 From locations along the Coastal Path and the AONB in the Bouldnor Copse and Cranmore area, views to the site are restricted by the wooded nature of the landscape, thus Officers consider that the visual impact of the development on this area would be minimal.

6.87 Due to the topography of the landscape there would be no, or very restricted, views of the proposed windfarm from locations to the south of the chalk ridge forming Compton Down and to the east of Brighstone Down. Other views of the turbines may be gained from higher locations to the north of the Newport area and the A3054, however these are from longer distances and are considered to be of limited significance.

6.88 Officers acknowledge that the proposed wind turbines would be visible from viewpoints on the "Mainland" such as Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes and higher heathland in the New Forest. However, from these locations the turbines would be seen from distance across the Solent with moving vessels against the undulating backdrop of the Island's countryside and are not considered to have a significant impact. Officers note that neither the New Forest National Park Authority nor the New Forest District Council have raised objections to the development.

Tranquillity

6.89 Third party objectors make reference to the adverse impact on the tranquillity of the area. Detailed considerations of noise impact at individual receptors are set out in the specific section on noise below. In 2007 the CPRE produced Tranquillity Mapping covering England, with the map for the Isle of Wight indicating the site to be in a relatively tranquil area, although the plans are quite generalised and very difficult to apply to individual site level. Officers note that the site is within a countryside location away from main settlements, although the B3399 and to an extent other roads, can be seen as a major contributors to background noise, currently detracting from the tranquillity of the area. The site lies outside the designated AONB, and separated from the closest point by the B3399, where one would expect to enjoy the tranquillity benefits of the countryside. Therefore Officers consider that the adverse impact on the tranquillity of the area is unlikely to be significant, and thus is not considered to be a sustainable reason for refusing this planning application.

Cumulative Impact

6.90 Officers have reviewed the information submitted in the LVIA and also independently prepared maps showing Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV's) for individual and combined areas where the turbines could be visible in conjunction with other approved schemes and those currently under consideration. Officers concur with the views of the council's landscape consultant that it is only the route of the Tennyson and Worsley Trails along the chalk ridge that the proposed Wellow and consented Cheverton schemes where could there be a sequential impact. From inspection of a transect ZTV overlying both schemes, it is noted that there are limited viewpoints within the AONB where both schemes could be seen, and in most cases would not be in the same vista. From viewpoints where both schemes would be seen in the same view, one or other would be at a substantial distance, thus minimising the cumulative impact. Thus as highlighted by the landscape consultant, the cumulative impact would only be sequential when travelling along the route and is not considered to be significant.

Mitigation

6.91 Further to the significant visual impacts discussed above, the applicant has not demonstrated that there is a viable means of mitigating the landscape and visual effects or adverse impact that would be caused by the proposal. Due to the scale of the proposal and the nature of the views to the site, Officers consider that successful mitigation would be unfeasible. However should members be minded to approve the application officers concur with its landscape consultant that a condition should be attached requiring landscaping to mitigate the impact of the proposed substation building.

Other Issues

6.92 It is noted that many of the third party objections refer to the adoption by the Scottish Parliament to a 2 km separation distance between windfarms and residential properties. Scottish Planning Policy (2010) states that*; "A separation distance of up to 2km between areas of search and the edge of cities, towns and villages is recommended to guide*

developments to the most appropriate sites and to reduce visual impact, but decisions on individual developments should take into account specific local circumstances and geography." This document therefore provides guidance to developers in terms of areas of search for windfarms and settlements, as opposed to being an exclusion zone around residential properties. Officers advise that this document is adopted as Scottish Planning Policy and does not carry any material weight in the determination of this planning application.

Officer Conclusions

6.93 For these reasons Officers conclude that the proposal would have a significant adverse visual impact within the landscape to the detriment of the outlook of local residents, users of the PRoW and highway network, as well as to parts of the designated Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which could not be overcome by either on-site or off-site mitigation. It is therefore considered to be contrary to Policies SP5, DM2, DM12 and DM16 of the Island Plan Core Strategy. The detailed examination of why the proposal is considered contrary to these policies is set out in paragraphs 6.68 to 6.92 and above. If members are minded to refuse permission for these reasons officers have suggested wording for refusal reasons which include these policies as set out in the recommended reasons for refusal at the end of this report.

Ecology, Natural Habitat and Trees.

The basis of consultation responses

6.94 A number of third party objectors have raised concerns over potential danger to wildlife (birds and bats) from the proposed turbines, as well as to badgers during the construction phase. These objectors include the RSPB (in terms of the potential impact on Golden Plovers) as well as the Badger Trust Isle of Wight, Shalfleet Parish Council, Wildlife Concern Isle of Wight and Yarmouth Town Council.

6.95 Natural England, as a statutory consultee with specific responsibility for nature conservation, has concluded that the development is unlikely to have an impact on bird and bat populations, nor the interest features of the Solent & Southampton Waters SPA / Ramsar, Isle of Wight Downs (SAC), or the Prospect Quarry, Compton Down, Yar Estuary and Newtown Harbour SSSI's.

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations

6.96 Section 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) of the NPPF states that the planning system should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Policy DM12 of the Core Strategy requires development proposals to protect the integrity of international, national, and local sites designated for reasons of biodiversity. Certain wildlife species are also afforded statutory protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

6.97 Members should note that one of the reasons for refusing planning application P/01400/06 was that it had not been demonstrated that the proposal would have an insignificant impact on the nature conservation status of bats.

Relevant sections of the application

6.98 Chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement contains the assessment of the possible terrestrial ecological and nature conservation impacts of the proposal, with Chapter 7 providing an assessment on ornithological impacts. Supplementary information was provided in relation to bat survey and bird data in response to the council's request under Regulation 22 of the EIA Regulations.

6.99 The ES confirms that a number of ecological surveys were undertaken including; amphibians, water voles, badgers, reptiles, bats (daytime, emergence and activity) and birds (wintering, breeding, diurnal, nocturnal surveys as well as target Golden Plover searches). The ES concludes that the turbines have been sited to be over 50 metres from trees and hedgerows and 300 metres from woodland to minimise the risk of collisions. No bats roosts would be affected by the proposal.

6.100 With regard to birds the ES concludes that there would be a neutral impact on wintering bird assemblage on the site during all phases of the development with the only impact of the development being a minor adverse impact on Golden Plover populations during the operational phase due to displacement of habitat, although this is not considered to be significant on the local population.

6.101 The ES also considers the potential impact of the proposed wind turbines on designated ecological sites and concludes that the residual impacts would not be significant.

6.102 A separate confidential report on badger impact was submitted to support the application.

Assessment of Ecological Impact.

6.103 Natural England is the statutory consultee with regard to nature conservation issues under the General Development Procedure Order 1995 and the provisions of section 28I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Natural England has particular responsibilities for Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and protected species.

6.104 Natural England has commented that the 2006 application had turbines in locations that had potential to impact on bats, but the turbines have been relocated such that they are sufficiently distant from hedgerow features and woodland. As such Natural England concludes that the development is unlikely to have an impact on bat populations. However, robust monitoring would be required to verify that no impact is occurring once operational if the proposal were to be approved.

6.105 In relation to birds Natural England has commented that the re-advertised application with supplementary bird data has enabled it to conclude that the proposals are likely to lead to the displacement of Golden Plover from the site, however this would be unlikely to lead to an impact on the overall population. As with bats, Natural England has also recommended that robust monitoring would be required to verify that no impact is occurring once the development is operational. Natural England has advised that it is the role of the Council's Senior Ecology Officer to assess any surveys relating to protected species used as monitoring reports if the application is approved.

6.106 In addition, Natural England has also commented that the Prospect Quarry, Compton Down, Yar Estuary and Newton Harbour SSSI's are unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposal.

6.107 The Council's Senior Ecology Officer has commented that the bat survey data demonstrates that the site is used by a number of bat species. However the proposed location of the turbines now avoids the shallow stream valley which appears to be used as a corridor for bat movement. Therefore it is concluded that impacts upon bats have been minimised and as a result significant impacts upon bat populations are unlikely.

6.108 In relation to the potential impact on birds the Senior Ecology Officer has commented that the Golden Plover remains the key species of concern for this site. Golden Plover have been categorised as being potentially susceptible to wind turbines throughout the year.

Natural England guidance states that Golden Plover show significant nocturnal activity and advise that surveys for this species should include night vision operations. Nocturnal bird studies were not carried out for the previously submitted application but some nocturnal surveys have been included to support the current one. The submitted surveys confirm the previous findings which demonstrate that the fields where the turbines are proposed are occasionally used by relatively low numbers of Golden Plover. The critical issue, with respect to Golden Plover, is the significance of any impact from the proposals upon the local population and the SPA interest features. Natural England has concluded that impacts would not be significant. This was also the conclusion reached by Natural England and the local authority ecologist when the previous application was submitted in 2006, taking into account the numbers of birds involved, the number of inland sites utilised and overall trends in local populations of overwintering Golden Plover. The further information supplied by the current applicant has not provided any further information which would lead to a change in that view. Whilst a full winter season's data would be useful in order to further increase confidence, it is likely that the conclusion on significance of impact would remain the same. Therefore the Senior Ecology Officer concludes that, on balance, the likelihood of significant impacts upon Golden Plover populations arising from the proposed development is low.

6.109 The Isle of Wight Badger Group believes that there is sett activity in the vicinity of the proposed junction improvement works to Broad Lane which has not been recorded by the consultants. This may be because the activity is more recent than the surveys carried out by the consultants, since badger activity changes over time. The Senior Ecology Officer has commented that a consequence of this badger activity may be that the precise location of the temporary access road off Broad Lane cannot be constructed according to the plans submitted. As such the Senior Ecology Officer has recommended that a condition requiring an updated badger survey and appropriate mitigation in light of the survey's findings be applied if the application is approved.

Trees

6.110 The Council's Tree Officer has commented that there are few trees on the application site that could be impacted upon by this development, although it is possible that certain trees would be impacted upon the route for the delivery of the turbines to the site. The application shows that it would be necessary to put in a temporary access road into Broad Lane to allow large vehicles to access the site. The cornering at Broad Lane could potentially cause the loss of two Sycamores on this corner.

6.111 Tree impact may also occur along the whole of the intended delivery route to this site, although no tree information has been submitted in support of the application to assess the tree impact in this regard. The Tree Officer has carried out an inspection of the proposed routing, and considers that whilst most sections of the route are acceptable, tree impacts may occur in certain locations due to the dimensions of the vehicle. These are as follows:

- The junction and bend off St Mary's roundabout. Here is a large hedge that screens the main road from the houses to the west and a group of poplar trees. To come round this bend it may be necessary to carryout work to the hedge and trees. No such work has been detailed.
- Along the route of A3054 there are two locations giving concern, these are around Three Copse Gate and Bouldnor Copse. At both points the trees canopies cross the road creating an arch. The clearance of these trees is about 5.5m, which is acceptable in most conditions. However give the topography of the areas and the length of the vehicles, it is possible that the clearance required will be greater than the 5.5m present.

6.112 The Tree Officer considers that whilst these problems may be resolved it will be necessary to survey the route to identify them and take the necessary precautions, which has not been

done by the applicant. Even if the impacts to trees can be resolved by tree work, it will also be necessary for the owners of the trees to give permission for such work to be carried out.

6.113 Officers have assessed the potential impact of the proposed improvement works to the Broad Lane junction on the trees in this location, and have confirmed that the works may impact on the root protection areas of a pair of sycamores at the Broad Lane / Main Road junction, and also would require the removal of some recently planted young trees along the highway boundary. Officers consider that the loss of, and potential impact to, these trees could be mitigated through a condition requiring replacement tree / hedge planting in this location.

6.114 Officers also note that no survey of trees along the intended delivery route has been undertaken by the applicant to assess the potential for abnormal loads to damage any trees overhanging the highway along the route. From the Tree Officer's inspection of the route it is clear that there are potential areas of concern where works may be required to trees, and the fact that this could require consent of landowners that have not been identified within the application. In the absence of supporting information to demonstrate that this issue is capable of satisfactory mitigation / resolution, it is recommended that this should constitute a reason for refusing the application.

Conclusions on Ecology

6.115 Natural England, who are the statutory consultee on issues relating to ecology, has concluded that the proposed development is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on nature conservation in terms of protected species (breeding and migratory birds and bats) as well as on the internationally and nationally designated site of ecological importance. This conclusion is supported by the Council's own ecology specialist.

6.116 The Council's Tree Officer has highlighted concerns with the proposal on the basis of insufficient information with regard to a tree impacts. Officers have concluded that the potential impact to trees at the junction of Main Road and Broad Lane could be satisfactorily controlled through a landscaping condition requiring tree planting to mitigate and potential damage to trees. However, Officers have concerns that there is insufficient information to satisfactorily demonstrate that the potential impact on trees along the intended delivery route is capable of resolution.

Impact upon Heritage Assets.

6.117 There are a number of objections on cultural heritage grounds with regard to impacts that the proposal would have on listed buildings and conservation areas, in particular Thorley Church, Newtown and Yarmouth Conservation Areas as well as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. These concerns were highlighted in more detail by English Heritage, CPRE, Thwart, the Yarmouth Society and Yarmouth Town Trust.

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations

6.118 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out policies for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Within this section local planning authorities are advised to recognise heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset). In addition, the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application.

6.119 Policy SP5 of the Island Plan Core Strategy offers support for proposals that protect, conserve and / or enhance the Island's historic environment. Development which has a

demonstrable adverse impact on the Island's historic environment should be avoided. This policy is supplemented by Policy DM11.

Relevant contents of the application

6.120 Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement provides an assessment of the likely potential impacts that the development may have on the historic environment in the vicinity of the application site. The ES gives consideration to potential impact on heritage assets in terms of; physical loss or damage to archaeological sites, historic buildings and historic landscapes, the setting of these assets, and the effects on the quality and integrity of the overall historic landscape.

6.121 The ES is informed by a desk based assessment, with supplementary data gathered through an archaeological trial trench evaluation. A supplementary Cultural Heritage Assessment Report focussing on the Historic Building Record and the likely effects on the Conservation Area at Newtown was submitted following the council's Regulation 22 request.

6.122 The ES concludes that the project would not have any substantial adverse effect on any aspect of the historic environment. There would be moderate adverse effects on a Scheduled Ancient Monument and on several Grade II Listed Buildings as a result of changes within their settings, but these would be reversible. There is potential for minor or moderate adverse effects on buried archaeological remains but the ES considers that these would be offset through a programme of further investigations before and during construction.

Assessment of Heritage Asset Impact.

Archaeology

6.123 With regard to archaeological impact English Heritage has commented that it does not agree with the conclusions of the ES, in that the impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Five Barrows would only be moderate since the turbines would be discordant and visually dominant in views from, to and encompassing these monuments. English Heritage considers the impact to be moderate / major. These comments also apply to the other scheduled monuments along the crest of the chalk ridge to the south of the application site and include; a round barrow cemetery on East Afton Down and a barrow on Tapnell Down. By virtue of their location, these heritage assets command wide zones of visibility, as intended at their time of construction. The ability to appreciate the visual relationship between the monuments is enhanced by the largely undeveloped and unchanged landscape character of the West Wight, and it is this visual relationship which would be adversely affected by the incongruous and intrusive massing and movement represented by a group of wind turbines. English Heritage concludes that these adverse consequences of the application must be weighed by the Local Planning Authority against the suggested public benefits. English Heritage considers that such harm would considerably outweigh the public benefit involved and recommend that this application be refused.

6.124 The Planning Archaeologist has advised that the geophysical prospection indicates the presence of Tumuli adjacent to the proposed turbine site, but these are entirely denuded due to continuous ploughing, although it seems likely that these were designed to be inter-visible with those on the chalk ridge to the south of the site.

6.125 Subsequent trial trenching targeted to encounter the proposed turbines was largely negative, The Planning Archaeologist concludes that the physical ground effects of the development could be mitigated by the implementation of a robust archaeological investigation, controlled through a condition should the application be approved.

6.126 With regards to the visual impact of the development on the setting of above ground cultural heritage, the Planning Archaeologist has expressed concerns about the methodology used which he considers does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the context of the proposal and also dismisses a high proportion of assets identified as a material consideration by the Planning Authority as unimportant. Without a demonstrable assessment of each asset and its relationship with the landscape, the Planning Archaeologist has little confidence in the findings of the ES, since it is considered that the setting of the Burial Mounds on the ridge to south of the site will clearly be compromised The Planning Archaeologist concludes that the views of English Heritage, as the competent authority for scheduled ancient monuments, should be taken into account on the impact on these heritage assets.

Summary

6.127 The comments of English Heritage and the Council's Planning Archaeologist conclude that the setting of burial mounds on the chalk ridge to the south of the application site, would be adversely affected by the incongruous and intrusive massing and movement represented by a group of wind turbines.

6.128 The Council's Planning Archaeologist concludes that the potential impact on below ground archaeological deposits is capable of mitigation through the imposition of a condition.

6.129 Officers acknowledge that the proposed windfarm would have a significant visual impact from the chalk downland to the south of the application, as assessed in the landscape visual impact section of this report, which hosts a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the form of burial mounds. The pertinent issue is therefore would the presence of the turbines cause substantial harm to the setting of these nationally designated heritage assets such that the development would make it difficult to understand and appreciate the monuments and their inter-relationship. Whilst Officers appreciate that the turbines would undoubtedly be visible from these heritage assets and have a detrimental impact on their setting and create a distraction, the turbines would be sited some 1.4 km from the ridge such that they would be interpreted as a separate modern element divorced from the groupings of burial mounds. On balance, therefore, Officers conclude that the impact on the setting of these heritage assets, while clearly detrimental would not reach the substantial level of harm to sustain a recommendation for refusal in this regard.

Historic Parks and Gardens

6.130 The Registered Historic Park and Garden of Westover is a potential visual receptor of the proposed wind turbine development. Westover is Grade II listed associated with the medieval manor of Westover House dating to the 1760s, and is situated approximately 4.5 km to the east of the application site.

6.131 English Heritage has made no comments on the potential impact on the setting of Westover. Likewise the Garden History Society does not wish to comment on this application.

Summary

6.132 Officers note the comments of English Heritage and the Garden History Society and concur with the conclusions of the ES that there are no protected long views from this Historic Park and Garden towards the application site. Therefore the proposal is unlikely to have an adverse visual impact of the proposal on the setting of Westover, it is considered to be in accordance with Government guidance contained within the NPPF and policies SP5 and DM11 of the Island Plan Core Strategy in this regard.

Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and the Historic Buildings Record

6.133 There are a number of Conservation Areas which are potential visual receptors of the proposed wind turbine development which include; Freshwater Bay, Norton, Newtown, and Yarmouth. The ES concludes that the magnitude of change on the setting of each of these Conservation Areas to be none.

6.134 English Heritage has commented that despite the distance from the turbines there would be an adverse impact on the setting of Newtown Conservation Area, with particular reference to tranquillity of this location and the impact on views from the Grade II* town hall which has public access. The impact on Newtown Conservation Area has also been raised by ThWART, with the Yarmouth Society and Yarmouth Town Trust raising concern about the impact on the historic setting of Yarmouth.

6.135 There are also numerous nationally and locally listed buildings within the vicinity of the application site, the settings of which could be adversely impacted by the proposed wind turbines. Particular reference is made by objectors to Thorley Church (Grade II), Thorley Manor (Grade II*) and Newtown Town Hall (Grade II*).

6.136 The ES considers that views towards the site from Thorley Manor to be of a low magnitude of change within the setting of this building and the level of sensitivity to change is notable, however the overall effect has been assessed as minor adverse. Newtown Town Hall is identified in the ES as an asset of high importance, although it considers that there would be a low level of change within the setting of this building and the overall effect has been assessed as minor adverse. In terms of listed buildings within Thorley (including Thorley Church) the ES considers that there would be a moderate magnitude of change within their setting, which is considered to be of medium importance and the overall effect moderate adverse.

6.137 Paragraphs 128 and 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework are clear that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting and local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

6.138 The assessment in the submitted ES refers to the importance of historic buildings by equating this to the level of designation and the impact magnitude which gauges the impact to the asset (i.e. physical affects to fabric or setting). It also identifies levels of sensitivity to change in a range from reduced (i.e. the significance of an asset is not likely to be affected) through to elevated (i.e. the significance of the asset may be wholly diminished by development within its surroundings). Officers have concerns that the ES does not demonstrate a clear understanding and evaluation of the significance of the asset and the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the asset in order to properly use this method of assessment. In particular, there is no reference to significance or views from assets or the inter-visibility between assets. As such Officers consider that the ES method of assessment is simplistic and fails to fully recognise and understand the significance of the assets affected, making it difficult to analyse the outcomes of the assessment.

6.139 These issues were highlighted to the applicant in the Council's request for further information. In light of these comments, a supplementary assessment report dated 27.10.11 was submitted by the applicant which refers to Newtown Conservation Area and the buildings on the Historic Buildings Record. Whilst the supplementary report information

is welcomed, Officers do not consider that it adequately addresses the concerns raised above.

6.140 Officers have however undertaken an independent assessment of the setting of the main listed buildings potentially impacted by the development. Thorley Church (Grade II) is situated on the northern side of Main Road, Thorley approximately 1 km to the north of Turbine 1. Partial views of the turbines would be gained from the entrance to the church which is on the southern side of this building, with vegetation in the form of yew trees which are evergreen and a boundary hedge as well as the covered entrance gate partially obscuring views, with more un-interrupted views gained from the gated entrance itself. Officers note that these southerly views are already damaged by the presence of two overhead power cables running east-west around 100 metres from the entrance. Officers agree that the wind turbines would have a detrimental impact on the setting of this listed building, however this level is assessed as moderate adverse would not be so distracting to prevent an understanding of the significance of this building and thus would not reach the level of substantial harm.

6.141 The proposal's effect upon Thorley Manor (grade II*), which is situated approximately 1.7 km to the north-west of the application site has been assessed in the ES as minor adverse. This building has a southerly aspect, with the southern boundary of this property formed by mature trees. Whilst there would be partial views of the turbines from the site and windows within this building particularly when the trees are not in leaf during winter, Officers consider that with the separation distance the adverse impact on the setting of this building is minor / moderate adverse and therefore would not cause substantial harm to its setting.

6.142 Newtown Town Hall is a Grade II* listed building set within Newtown Conservation Area approximately 5 km to the north-east of the turbines. The principal entrance to the building is to the northern elevation, with steps to a raised doorway on the southern elevation. From these steps Officers note that views could be gained to the turbines, which would be viewed in the wider landscape against the backdrop of Afton Down. Officers consider that with the separation distance the adverse impact on the setting of this building is minor and therefore would not cause substantial harm to its setting.

Summary

6.143 Officers have concerns that the level of information supplied within the Environmental Statement and the supplementary Cultural Heritage Assessment report does not appear to understand, evaluate or demonstrate the significance of the asset and the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the asset. Officers have, however, undertaken an independent assessment of the main heritage assets which would be potentially impacted by the development, and concluded in each case that the setting of these buildings would not be significantly altered to result in substantial harm to its setting.

Noise Impact

6.144 Third party responses outline concerns over the potential noise impacts of the development and that turbines will lead to an increased incidence of noise and disturbance on amenity for occupiers of residential properties, including disturbance from infrasound and vibrations.

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations

6.145 Best practice guidance on the assessment and measurement of the noise impacts of windfarms is contained in the recommendations of ETSU-R-97 '*The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms".* This *'gives indicative noise levels calculated to offer a reasonable degree of protection to windfarm neighbours"*.

Relevant contents of the application

6.146 Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement contains a detailed assessment of the likely noise and vibration effects during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed wind farm. This assessment was undertaken in accordance with the ETSU-R-97 guidance through the undertaking of baseline noise monitoring at five locations representative of the noise-sensitive receptors closest to the development, with wind speed monitoring at a height of 10 metres. Thus data was used to predict noise levels and limits for the combined operation of the turbines at twelve locations in the area using the manufacturer's sound power data for an Enercon E70 turbine. The ES states that the predicted levels of turbine noise comply with the ETSU-R-97 noise limits for both quiet daytime and night time at all locations. Therefore the ES concludes that the predicted wind farm noise levels at all noise sensitive receptors are not significant.

6.147 The ES also considers low frequency noise, infrasound and amplitude (aerodynamic) modulation, which concludes that under normal circumstances the levels of low frequency noise and vibration generated by modern wind turbines are well below both the limits of perception and recommended exposure limits at the nearest properties.

Assessment of Noise Impact.

6.148 The council's Environmental Health Officer has commented that ETSU-R-97 does not provide a procedure for the measurement of background noise monitoring, with this document providing procedures for the measurement of noise from wind turbines. The Environmental Health Officer (EHO) notes that the locations for background noise given in the ES are at least 3.5 metres from any reflecting surface, and in many cases well in excess of 3.5 metres, whereas the EHO would favour a position 3.5 metres from dwellings since this is likely to be the situation experienced by residents. The use of a free field position away from buildings is likely to result in a measured background level being elevated by 2 to 3dB, which could result in the turbines being more audible than predicted and closer to the derived daytime limit.

6.149 The submitted information addressing the issue of potential wind shear is considered by the Environmental Health Officer to be satisfactory.

6.150 ETSU-R-97 advises that the noise from a wind farm should be limited to 5dBA above background for both day and night-time, subject to a fixed lower limit of 35 to 40 dBA during the day and 43 dBA at night, based on the premiss that residents are indoors at night. Having due regard to these limits, the EHO considers that the stated margin for noise levels at Dog Kennel Cottage between predicted levels and ETSU-R-97 criteria, shows that the noise from the turbines would not exceed the ETSU-R-97 criteria. The EHO notes that it is possible that the derived daytime background level may be higher than it would have been had measurements been taken 3.5m from buildings, although the predicted night-time maximum noise level would still be below 43dB at all times. As such the EHO advises that consideration could be given to reducing the maximum permitted night-time level by 2 or 3 dB, and to limiting the day-time noise level to an absolute limit through a condition in the event that permission is granted. Since the anticipated noise levels have been predicated on the use of a particular make and model of turbine, the EHO recommends that in the event of that the application is approved, a condition should be imposed to limit the engineering specifications for the proposed turbine to those specifications provided in support of the application, since other makes/models may have significantly different sound output characteristics. The EHO has also confirmed that the derived daytime limit for Hartshole Cottage the predicted levels would still be below the applicants derived daytime limit as required by ETSU-R-97.

6.151 In the event of approval the EHO has also suggested that the applicant is either invited to enter into a legal agreement to control noise impact, or alternatively impose conditions along the lines of the suggested conditions (1) to (7) listed in appendix 10.1 of the ES.

6.152 It is highlighted to Members that this does not mean that the noise from the turbines will be inaudible at residential premises under all wind speeds and atmospheric conditions. Whilst in decibel terms the noise levels may not be great, the fact that the noise from wind turbines is very different to the noise currently experienced in the vicinity is likely to negatively affect the current noise environment of the area. In particular the characteristics of amplitude modulated noise from wind turbines are likely to be clearly distinguishable and may be difficult to ignore.

6.153 With regard to the possibility that the proposed development, if built, could result in a statutory noise nuisance being caused, reference is made to guidance entitled "Wind Farm Noise Statutory Nuisance Complaint Methodology" (AECOM 2011). Statutory Nuisance covers unreasonable material interference with use of property or personal comfort, or matters that are injurious to health. In all jurisdictions, and these are not constrained by the planning system, or compliance with any such conditions imposed on a development. Although planning controls may offer greater protection of residential amenity than can be achieved via Statutory Nuisance, although both regimes run in parallel. Investigation of complaints of Statutory Nuisance due to noise from wind farms and turbines would need to be undertaken on a case by case basis should include noise measurements as well as a detailed assessment of the weather conditions when complaints arise and during any active phase of the investigation.

6.154 With regard to the concerns raised by objectors as the potential impacts of other health effects from the development, the EHO has confirmed that there is currently no robust evidence that low frequency noise (including 'infrasound') or ground-borne vibration from wind farms has adverse impacts on wind farm neighbours. In addition the EHO has found nothing conclusive that suggests there are adverse health effects from electro-magnetic radiation, or that ionising radiation may be emitted from wind turbines.

Summary

6.155 The Council's Environmental Health Officer accepts the conclusions of the ES that the noise emissions from the turbines, as experienced at noise sensitive receptors would be below the recommended ETSU-R-97 levels. In the event of approval conditions, or a legal agreement, should be imposed to ensure that noise levels are below the ETSU-R-97 levels. The Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that there is currently no robust evidence that low frequency noise (including 'infrasound') or ground-borne vibration from wind farms has adverse impacts on wind farm neighbours.

Highway impact of the proposed development.

The basis of responses

6.156 Objections to the development have been received to the development on grounds of the traffic implications on the local highway network especially from construction traffic. In addition, the potential adverse impact on users of the Public Rights of Way has been highlighted by objectors.

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations

6.157 Section 4 of the NPPF relates to Promoting Sustainable Transport. This guidance is aimed at reducing the need to travel through the promotion of sustainable patterns of development by utilising sustainable transport modes. All developments that generate significant amounts

of movements should be supported by a transport assessment, with one of the aims being whether safe and suitable access to the site and be achieved for all people.

6.158 Policy DM17 of the Core Strategy requires development proposals to demonstrate that the network has adequate capacity to accommodate the development.

6.159 Members will also note that the previous planning application was refused for the following reason;

> *"The proposed development will result in an unacceptable impact on existing public rights of way, to the detriment of access thereof, and as such is contrary to policy TR17 (Public Rights of Way) of the Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan."*

Relevant contents of the application

6.160 Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement identifies the transport and access issues associated within the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development.

6.161 The ES assesses options for the transportation of the component parts for the wind turbines to the site, with two preferred points of entry to the Island given as; Medina Wharf, Cowes and the Vestas Factory Wharf Quayside Facility, Newport.

6.162 The route from Medina Wharf to the site would be along the facilities access road to the A3020 (Newport Road) via the Somerton roundabout and then onto the A3054 (Forest Road) via St Mary's roundabout. The route then follows the A3054 to Yarmouth at which point the vehicles would turn in the Riverside Public Car Park and return along the A3054 to its junction with Station Road, Ningwood. The vehicles would then progress south along Station Road and turn right into the B3041 (Thorley Road) to the junction with Broad Lane, Thorley and then onto the proposed new site access in Broad Lane.

6.163 The route from the Vestas Factory Wharf Quayside Facility to the St Mary's Roundabout would be via Monks Brook, and Dodnor Lane. From St Mary's roundabout the route would be as described above.

6.164 Average daily vehicle movements (one way) associated with the six month construction period for the project are estimated in the ES as follows;

	One Way Vehicle Movements						
	Month						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*
HGV's	21	16	13	20	9	3	1
Abnormal Loads	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Light Vehicles	14	19	19	16	14	14	14
Totals	**35**	**34**	**31**	**36**	**22**	**16**	**14**

(* 2 weeks)

6.165 Since the wind turbines would be operated and managed remotely, traffic generation for the on-going maintenance of the turbines, once installed, would be restricted to maintenance and routine checks. These are likely to be carried out by cars or light vans and would be of the order of one visit per week, with more routine maintenance every six months, with a few more vehicles for personnel, light equipment and personnel.

6.166 Decommissioning would be a reversal of the construction phases, although less traffic is likely to be generated as less work would be required to remove the structures.

Assessment of Traffic Impact.

6.167 The ES advises that the traffic generated by the development during the operational phase would be minimal, amounting to a weekly visit by a car / small van with more routine maintenance programmed every six months Therefore in terms of assessing the proposal in terms of sustainable transport patterns, the development would be acceptable since minimal journeys would arise as a result of the development. Thus it is unlikely that the traffic or transport impacts from the operational phase of the project would be significant, and in this regard the proposed development would comply with the aims of Policy DM17 of the Core Strategy and Government advice in the NPPF.

6.168 Thus the main impact that the development would have on the local highway network would be during the construction and decommissioning phases, largely as a result of the abnormal load movements required to allow the transportation of individual turbine components to the site.

6.169 The applicant should thus demonstrate that the access roads are suitable for the transportation of components to the site from the delivery port, and to determine whether any sections of the route would require modification. This information should include; route options, swept path analysis of junctions, identification of pinch points and assessment of bridges.

Construction Traffic Routing

6.170 The Highways Engineer has acknowledged that the proposed route for construction traffic set out in the ES predominantly reflects that which accompanied the 2006 application, to which no objection was raised by the Council. The Highways Engineer has confirmed that any deviations from the 2006 route have been tracked and are compliant, thus it is considered that all vehicle types associated with the proposed development can be accommodated, subject to localised accommodation works and the escorting of vehicles.

6.171 Despite the Regulation 22 request for additional information, no additional data has been submitted by the applicant in terms of a full assessment of the highway structures along the proposed routes. The Highways Engineer has confirmed that this matter could be satisfactorily covered by a pre-commencement condition to ensure that all structures are assessed and any required works undertaken.

6.172 The applicant has confirmed that all relevant utilities have been consulted in terms of overhead apparatus. The maximum height of the abnormal loads is 4.5m, the proposed transportation route forms part of the Island's bus network which typically accommodate double-decker buses which are 4.54m in height.

6.173 It is noted that the application proposes to turn abnormal loads within the River Road Car Park, Yarmouth. The Highways Engineer has confirmed that the desired turning manoeuvre can be achieved within this car park, as detailed on drawing no. JNY6595-02 Rev B). Members should note that considerations relating to the need to remove public parking from this area to guarantee space for turning, and the potential for damage to the car park surface, which falls outside of the limit of adopted highway, is a civil matter for agreement between the applicant and the Council as landowner, and thus falls outside the Local Planning Authority's remit.

Offsite Highway Improvements for Construction Traffic

6.174 Offsite Improvements are proposed in two areas; the provision of passing bays within Broad Lane, and the remodelling of the junction of Broad Lane with the B3401 to accommodate the swept path of the Turbine Blade Vehicle.

6.175 The applicant proposes to provide three passing bays within Broad Lane as detailed on Drawing No. JNY6595-22 Rev A. The Highways Engineer requested the provision of an additional bay as part of the Regulation 22 request, however the applicant has chosen not to provide this. The justification for this being to minimise impact on ecology and that all abnormal load movements will be escorted to and from the site. The Highways Engineer has acknowledged that the temporary access route arrangement as detailed on Drawing No. JNY6595-20 Rev C would provide a means for the passing of two HGV's, and the applicant has control over the hedgerow abutting the eastern side of Broad Lane in order to provide forward visibility of approaching vehicles. Thus the proposed junction modifications effectively provide an additional passing point for HGV's. For these reasons the Highways Engineer considers the proposal to be acceptable in this regard.

6.176 The Highways Engineer originally sought that the proposed junction modifications be reconfigured to not only provide an alignment capable of accommodating the largest proposed construction vehicles, but also to provide a long term solution to the current shortfalls of this part of the highway network (substandard visibility about the junction of Broad Lane with the B3401 when existing Broad Lane and viewing to the west) to accommodate the increase in traffic movements that will be brought about during the construction phase. However, the applicant has not agreed to remodel the proposal in line with this request. The Highways Engineer has confirmed that it has been demonstrated that the layout detailed on Drawing No. JNY6595-20 Rev C can accommodate all construction vehicles (see Drawing No. JNY6595-02 Rev B Inset 6) turning into Broad Lane when approaching from the east and those vehicles approaching this junction from the west will not present a problem due to the existing road alignment. The proposed temporary access route would also provide a significant improvement in terms of visibility to vehicles existing Broad Lane and travelling east. It is also acknowledged that the majority of vehicles using this proposed route will be escorted loads. For these reasons the Highways Engineer considers the remodelling of the Broad Lane junction to be acceptable.

6.177 Other elements of the public highway would need to be reconfigured to implement the proposed development which would require the applicant to enter into an agreement under the Highways Act 1980 prior to commencement of works. This would give the Local Highway Authority control over the form of construction of any elements of the proposal which fall within the limit of adopted highway, including the temporary relocation of any existing street furniture. All other aspects of the build can be addressed via condition to ensure that the built form is suitable of the proposed traffic movements, does not have a negative effect on the existing highway network and highway users (including for features such as drainage, signing, lining and landscaping). In terms of the control of use the vast majority of the temporary access route will sit outside of the limit of adopted highway and will not be open to the use of the public at large. The Highways Engineer has confirmed that this matter could be addressed via condition requiring the applicant to submit for approval a traffic management plan confirming how the use of the proposed route would be restricted.

Proposed New Vehicular Site Access on Broad Lane.

6.178 The application proposes the formation of a new vehicular access onto Broad Lane, approximately 1.5 km to the north of B3401 (Main Road, Thorley) which would be used by traffic to access the five turbines sites by new internal access roads.

6.179 In light of the supplementary information provided by the applicant the Highways Engineer has confirmed that that the required visibility splays of X=2.4m by Y=215.0m, as detailed on Drawing No. JNY6595-19 Rev D can be achieved on land within the control of the applicant and their provision could be covered through a condition.

6.180 The Highways Engineer has also confirmed the proposed access would allow abnormal loads the necessary room to manoeuvre to access the site via this access. It is also acknowledged that that once the components have been delivered to site the abnormal load vehicle can be reduced in length to 16.50 metres, comparable to a standard HGV, thereby allowing vehicles to turn onsite, as detailed on drawing No. JNY6595-04 Appendix 9.2 Rev E. Therefore it is concluded that the proposed access is acceptable to allow access by abnormal loads.

Highway and Accessibility Conclusions

6.181 The Highways Engineer has confirmed that the sites access, construction traffic routing, capacity, offsite improvements, and accessibility are acceptable. In the event of approval, it is recommended that conditions relating to; Provision of visibility splays, gate setback, provision of unloading / loading / turning space, details of the site access road junction, details of the construction compound, provision of passing bays, wheel cleaning facilities and agreement of a traffic management plan are imposed.

Impact on Public Rights of Way

6.182 Further to the Council's request under EIA Regulation 22, an additional plan (Figure 1; Rights of Way) was supplied by the applicant detailing the position of the proposed turbines with regards to the Public Rights of Way (PROW's) in the area.

6.183 The council's Public Rights of Way Officer has indicated that this plan is correct and notes that none of the turbines would be within "fall-over" distance of the proposed turbines. The Rights of Way Officer also notes that the public bridleway is further away (around 500 metres) than the 200 metres recommended by the British Horse Society.

6.184 The Rights of Way Officer notes that the eastern site boundary lies directly adjacent to Footpath S18 and crosses Footpath S34, and highlights that consideration should be given to any boundary structures such that they do not encroach or affect the amenity for users of the PROWS. Officers note that Figure 1 shows the ES study area adjacent to the footpaths with the actual red line application site around 90 metres from these routes.

6.185 Officers note that one of the reasons for the refusal of the previous planning application was the *unacceptable impact on existing public rights of way to the detriment of access.* On assessing the information submitted within this application and the comments of the Rights of Way Officer, it is considered that the proposal would not physically impact on access to the PROW's in this area. Impact on users of these PROW's is covered in the assessment of Landscape Visual Impact, as visual receptors, and it is considered that this issue could be adequately covered in any reason for refusal on visual impact grounds. Thus Officers consider that the previous reason for refusal is not required.

6.186 From assessment of the submitted plans Officers note that the distances of the proposed turbines 3, 4 and 5 are approximately 100 – 110 metres from public footpaths S18 and S34. If micro-siting of up to 20 metres is allowed, as detailed at section 2.9 of the ES, this could bring the turbines to within 80 metres of the PROW's, and close to a position whereby blades would oversail the footpath. Therefore it is considered that in the event of approval a condition is imposed requiring the turbines to be sited at least "fall over" distance from PROW's.

Summary Highways and Rights of Way

6.187 The Council's Public Rights of Way Officer and Highways Engineer have raised no objection to the proposal in terms of adverse impact on the Rights of Way network, or the local highway network. Officers consider that the proposal is in accordance with the aims of Policy DM7 of the Island Plan Core Strategy as well as Government advice in the NPPF, subject to the imposition of conditions.

Socio-Economic Impacts

Planning policy and guidance/other material considerations.

6.188 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF is clear that there is a need for the planning system to perform a number of roles in terms of; an economic role, a social role and an environmental role. Therefore an assessment is needed at to the impacts on these three areas, and a balanced judgement made as to whether any negative impact would be outweighed by the socio-economic benefits of the proposal.

Relevant issues within the ES accompanying the planning application.

6.189 Chapter 13 of the ES gives consideration to Land Use and Community issues associated with the proposed development. In terms of job creation, other than during the construction period, the development would not be permanently staffed, therefore would not have any impact on permanent employment levels. Taking other studies into account, the ES considers that there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed development would have a negative effect on tourism in the area.

6.190 The ES also proposes that the wind farm would contribute financially towards a community fund to be invested in local community projects. This would commit the developer to provide £2,000 per MW per year for the lifetime of the project. The applicant also proposed to implement a Local Energy Organisation, a non-profit making local energy group, which would offer households in close proximity to the development discounted electricity, in the form of £100 rebate for households directly neighbouring the site and a 10% discount for energy for households in surrounding areas for a green energy provided.

Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impacts.

6.191 There are a significant number of third parties who raise an objection to the proposal on the grounds that the tourism industry, which contributes significantly to the Isle of Wight's economy, would suffer if this application is approved.

6.192 Officers appreciate that there are many people, including tourists, who consider wind turbine developments to be visually objectionable, such that visitors may not choose to holiday on the Isle of Wight. Studies have been undertaken in Scotland where there are currently a number of existing windfarms and the Scottish Executive, in 2008, published The Economic Impacts of Wind Farms on Scottish Tourism which concluded that whilst it is clear that there is an impact from windfarms on visitor numbers, this impact is very small.

6.193 Officers conclude that in the event that this development was constructed, it is unlikely that a significant number of future tourists would not choose to visit the Isle of Wight as a direct result of a windfarm, since the basis of deciding holiday destinations is made up of a number of factors and it is considered that the installation of wind turbines at Wellow is likely to carry minor weighting in the overall decision. As such Officers consider that the potential adverse impact on tourism and the local economy is largely unquantifiable and likely be minimal, thus would not be a sustainable reason for refusing this planning application.

6.194 In terms of assisting the local economy through jobs and employment, it is noted from the ES that there would be some short term employment opportunities for local workers during the construction period. However, this would be for a limited period amounting to a total of six months, with up to 20 persons on site throughout the majority of the construction phases. On-going employment through maintenance over the turbines would be negligible. Thus the impact on the local employment opportunities would be temporary and limited.

6.195 The make / model of the proposed turbines has not yet been determined due to the uncertainty with the planning process and associated lead in times in placing an order with a supplier, with turbine models changing as new technology updates the range. It is noted that the ES makes reference to the site becoming a "test" site for Vestas, however since the make / model of the turbines have not been formally decided by the applicant, with specifications provided in the ES based on an Enercon model, it is not certain that Vestas turbines would be used. Thus limited weight can be given to the potential benefits for this local employer.

6.196 Officers welcome the proposal that the development would contribute financially towards a community fund to be invested in local community projects, in the sum of £2,000 per MW produced per year for the lifetime of the project. The delivery of this would need to be included in the Heads of Terms covered by a Legal Agreement. The applicant is also proposing to implement a Local Energy Organisation (LEO) scheme to offer households in close proximity to the development discounted electricity, in the form of £100 rebate for households directly neighbouring the site and a 10% discount for energy for households in surrounding areas for a green energy provided. However, no details of the properties to which this would apply have been provided as part of the application. The ES provides very limited information in terms of the properties to which the LEO scheme would apply or any details of how this scheme would work and be delivered. In the absence of firm supporting details for the workings and delivery of this scheme, Officers advise that limited weight should be attached to the creation of a LEO.

Summary

6.197 Officers consider that, on balance, the socio-economic benefits associated with the scheme, in terms of securing a fund for local community projects, a LEO scheme for local residents and the temporary limited employment opportunities do not outweigh the visual impact concerns with the development discussed above.

Other Relevant Issues

Telecommunications

6.198 Individual objections have been made on the grounds of loss of signals for telecommunications equipment. In addition, Arqiva has objected to the proposal on the grounds that the turbines 1, 2, 3 and 4 would affect microwave links from the Rowridge transmitter to Poole and Mannings Heath.

6.199 The applicant has commented that with the switch to digital, it is unlikely that that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the broadcasting signals. The applicant has confirmed that they are prepared to enter into a legal agreement to fund investigations and remediation if necessary, or secured in the form of a planning condition. Officers concur that this impact is capable of resolution and mitigation through the imposition of condition requiring the agreement and implementation of a Microwave Link Mitigation scheme such that these broadcast signals remain operational. Arqiva has confirmed that developer funded remediation secured through a legal agreement or pre-commencement condition.

6.200 If there is potential for disruption to television reception (predicted or measured) then the broadcasters and Ofcom recommend that local authorities should consider imposing a requirement for the wind farm developer to take remedial action (and this will typically require an on-site survey to determine appropriate remedial measures, for example through the use of small relay transmitters to fill in local reception. The applicant has confirmed that this could be addressed through a planning condition, although with the switch over to digital, this should not be an issue. Officers consider that this impact is capable of resolution and mitigation through the imposition of condition requiring the agreement and implementation of a survey, investigation and alleviation of any elector-magnetic interference to terrestrial television caused by the operation of the turbines.

Impact on Property Value and Sales

6.201 As a general principle, fears over loss of property value or loss of house sales should be accorded little or no weight in the determination of planning applications, as the basic premise is that the system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another, and that proposals should be considered in terms of their effect on the amenity and existing use of land and buildings in the "public interest". The land use planning considerations should therefore centre on the acceptability of a development on the level of amenity enjoyed by residents, rather than matters like financial gain or loss.

Precedence

6.202 The possibility of the grant of permission setting a precedent for the submission of further wind turbine applications, and pressuring the Authority to approve them is not in itself a defensible ground for refusing permission. The basic principle is that each application has to be assessed on its own particular merits against planning policies and other material considerations, and it is these matters which should determine whether to grant or refuse.

Grid Connection Issues

6.203 The grid connection would require separate planning permission and therefore cannot be used as a reason to refuse this application. Member's should note that the ES shows an indicative route for the cable connection to the National Grid, which is via an underground cable running alongside the eastern side of Broad Lane to a 33 kv overhead power line which runs east-west approximately 50 metres to the south of Main Road, Thorley. In principle, Officers consider the use of an underground cable to be the most satisfactory solution, subject to consideration of such details through a future application.

The efficiency of this type of renewable energy installation.

6.204 It has been suggested by third party objectors to the proposed development that wind turbines are an inefficient means of generating electricity and other countries are de-commissioning their wind turbines.

6.205 Paragraph 98 of the NPPF makes it clear that Local Planning Authorities should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Policy SP6 of the Core Strategy provides a target for contributions through wind energy. Therefore it is considered that this project would contribute towards renewable energy production, and the efficiency of wind turbines is not a material reason to refuse planning permission.

6.206 Notwithstanding this, the UK has its own national targets and what is happening elsewhere in Europe is not relevant to this application.

Aviation Lighting will cause visual disturbance

6.207 Current legislation (Navigation Order 2005) states that warning lights are only required by the CAA on structures which are over 150 metres high. The CAA has not expressed a requirement for aviation lighting. The applicant has confirmed that it is not the intention to place any lights on the turbines. As the turbines are below this height there would be no requirement for lighting. As a result these proposals do not include warning lights.

Health and Safety Issues

6.208 Third parties have raised concerns that ice-throw and blade failure and lightning strikes have been known to occur on older models of turbines.

6.209 The applicant has confirmed that the turbines would be fitted with a safety mechanism consisting of sensors that would inhibit turbine operation in the event of ice build up on the blades. These vibration sensors can detect any imbalance resulting from ice build up and which then inhibit turbine operation in such circumstances. Lightening receptors are also fitted on blades which discharge electricity to the rotor hub, the shaft, the main frame, and to earth by way of carbon brushes. Any turbines installed will be certified in accordance with the relevant European standards and installed, operated and maintained in strict accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Shadow Flicker

6.210 Chapter 15 of the ES provides an assessment of shadow flicker, which may occur at neighbouring properties under sunny conditions, and at certain hours of the day / times of the year when the sun passes behind the turbine blades creating a shadow which flicks on and off.

6.211 Guidance has shown that shadow flicker effects only occur within 10 rotor diameters of a wind turbine. Thus when considering this application for turbines with a diameter of up to 70m, there should be no shadow flicker effects outside 700m from a wind turbine. Only properties within 130 degrees either side of north, relative to the turbines, can be affected as turbines do not cast long shadows on their southern side.

6.212 The ES has undertaken an assessment of shadow flicker on neighbouring residential properties based on a rotor diameter of 70 metres, which identifies that around 35 residential properties around the application site have potential to be affected by shadow flicker. The ES proposes that following a grant of consent an accurate assessment of each property would be undertaken to survey window positions in these properties which would then be run through a software programme providing hours and dates when the property would be affected. The relevant turbine would then be programmed to shut down during these periods. Monitoring of this situation is proposed to be undertaken during the first year of operation.

6.213 Officers consider that the mitigation measures proposed to address the potential shadow flicker impacts referred to in Chapter 15 of the ES are capable of being satisfactorily mitigated through a condition requiring modelling of impacts, shutting down of turbines during the relevant periods and the monitoring / remediation of impacts should this application be approved.

Decommissioning and Restoration

6.214 The Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application states that the wind turbines have a design life of approximately 25 years, after which time the applicant has three options;

- Apply for permission to extend the operation of the windfarm for an additional period;
- Decommission the wind farm and apply for planning permission for new wind turbines on the same site; or
- Decommission the wind farm and re-instate the site.

6.215 Should the planning application be approved, a condition would need to be applied to the permission restricting the lifespan of the development to 25 years, after which time the infrastructure should be removed from the site and the lands restored.

6.216 Officers note that the information supplied by the applicant proposes that; the turbines would be dismantled and taken off-site and their foundations removed to depth of 0.6 metres and land reinstated. The substation and control buildings would either be re-used for an alternative use or removed from the site. Buried cables would be de-energised and left in place. Access tracks would be retained to allow the land user their use for accessing the land for agricultural purposes and crane hardstandings would be either be removed or left for another use.

6.217 The decommissioning of the site would need to be controlled through a condition agreeing a decommissioning and site restoration scheme. From the information supplied by the applicant, in addition to removal of the wind turbines from the site, Officers consider that the scheme should also include the removal of all buildings and access roads, such that the land is returned to current undeveloped state.

6.218 Officers also advise that the decommissioning and restoration of the site would need to be secured through a legal agreement, which includes the provision of a financial bond.

Proximity of a Public Sewer to the Access Road.

6.219 Objections have been received to the proposed development from third parties on grounds that the access road would adversely impact on a public sewer. Southern Water has confirmed that there are no sewers in the vicinity of any works. The route to the proposed turbines crosses the route of existing water mains in public highway and any proposed works improving the highway would be covered by the New Roads and Street works Act and would adequately protect the plant.

Surface water.

6.220 Objections have been received to the development from third parties on the basis that surface water run-off from the development would result in flooding in Thorley.

6.221 Chapter 12 of the ES provides and assessment of Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Quality. The ES states that it is proposed to dispose of surface water from the hardstanding areas through the use of soakaways, and /or attenuation within drainage ditches and swales along tracks and other hardstanding areas. This would provide a reduction in the overall run-off rate from the site and therefore flood risk, on-site and within the surrounding area.

6.222 The site is within Flood Zone 1 and thus there would be no impact on fluvial flows routes in the area.

6.223 Officer note that neither Southern Water nor the Environment Agency raise any objection to the proposed development. Thus this issue is capable of resolution through the imposition of a condition to agree the means of surface water disposal from the development, which would be undertaken in consultation with Southern Water and the Environment Agency.

Planning Application Determination Process

6.224 Third party objections make reference to process procedures around the determination of the application with reference to a lack of consultation time and a lack of local community consultation.

6.225 The planning application was originally advertised for public consultation for a three week period with a deadline given for the receipt of comments as 5 August 2011. The consultation involved the sending of individual letters to statutory consultees and the occupiers of neighbouring properties, site notices around the application site and along the intended delivery route and a public notice in the local press. This period was informally extended until 19 August (two weeks) to enable consultees additional time to prepare their responses. The application was also re-advertised for a further three week period ending on 30 March 2012 to enable all interested parties the opportunity to make comment on the further information supplied by the applicant in relation to the Council's request under Regulation 22 of the EIA Regulations.

6.226 The 21 day period for the receipt of comments is in accordance with the requirements of both the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 and the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure Order) 1995. In addition, the Local Planning Authority is obliged to give consideration to all representations which are received before a decision is reached on the application. Indeed some of the letters of representation referred to within this report were received outside this statutory period. Thus Officers consider that third parties have had sufficient time to make representations on this application.

6.227 Pre-application consultation with the local community is advised as best practice, rather than a statutory requirement on developers / applicants. The application has been supported by a Statement of Community Consultation (March 2011) which details the programme of pre-application consultation undertaken by Infinergy. This pre submission consultation included; the establishment of a Parish Council Liaison Group, the holding of community open days at 3 local venues, publication of a project booklet for local residents and a project website. Therefore Officers consider that the applicant has undertaken a significant programme of pre-application consultation with the local community.

Human Rights

6.228 This report contains an Officer assessment of each issues and a justification for the recommendations herein, which has been considered against the Human Right Act 1998 and in particular article 6, article 8 and article 1 of the first protocol. Officers consider recognise that there may be a (limited) impact upon local residents peacefully enjoying their properties but this impact is considered proportionate and necessary for the legitimate interest of the proper planning for the area. It is concluded that the proposed development would not unlawfully infringe rights under Article 8 or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998.

7. Conclusion and Justification for Recommendation

7.1 The determination of major applications of this nature requires a careful balancing exercise, within the context set by legislation, which requires the Council to make decisions in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2. The report sets out in some detail a range of land use planning issues which are relevant to the weighing of the merits of the application. Evaluation of the issues suggests there are conflicts with elements of development plan policy, and that the final decision rests on whether any harm identified is sufficiently compelling, when set against other material considerations, to justify refusal of permission.

7.3 In assessing the weight to be given to factors which presume against the grant of permission, due account has to be given to the possibility of addressing conflicts with policy or potential harm, by way of suitable planning conditions or legal agreements. Hence whilst acknowledging the basis of concerns over aspects of the development, experience from previous applications and appeals suggests specific impacts such as those relating to noise, electromagnetic interference, archaeology, hydrology and highways, can be mitigated satisfactorily through appropriate controls as part of any permission.

7.4 There is significant Government support given to renewable energy in the National Planning Policy Framework, various White Papers, the Climate Change Act 2008 and other reports, which highlight the need to assist in achieving the various national and local targets for electricity generation from renewable sources in helping to combat climate change. Thus the benefits of the proposal in providing 12.5 MW of renewable energy will need to be set against the potential adverse effects from the development.

7.5 The assessment of the Environmental Statement and the issues raised by objectors to and supporters of the scheme shows that there are outstanding issues which have not been satisfactorily addressed within the ES, or are capable of resolution and mitigation with appropriate conditions or legal agreements. These issues relate to;

- Adverse visual impact of the development within the local landscape including considerations of; landscape character and sensitivity, the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and sensitive receptors in the area (including users of the PROW network / local residents).
- Insufficient information relating to potential impacts on trees.

7.6 The information submitted in support of the application in terms of its benefits relating to; contributing a community fund; contributing to the Council's Eco-Island objectives; contributing the Council's renewable energy production targets, and contributing to the UK's response to climate change, is considered to be insufficient to outweigh the concerns summarised in the above paragraph. Therefore, on balance, the application has been recommended for the refusal of planning permission.

Recommendation

This application is recommended for the refusal of planning permission.

Reasons

1) The proposed development by virtue of its dominance, scale, siting and layout would result in a significant adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the nationally designated landscape of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in particular from; the chalk down to the south of the application site (Afton Down to Five Barrows and associated National Trust Access Land), and Tennyson Down, such that it would compromise the statutory purpose of the AONB. The applicant has not demonstrated that these identified adverse impacts are capable of satisfactory mitigation. In consequence the proposal is contrary Government advice in the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development), DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and DM16 (Renewables) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

2) The proposed development by virtue of its dominance, scale, siting and layout would result in a significant adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the local landscape to the detriment of sensitive receptors in the area including; occupiers of residential properties in Thorley and Wellow (1 – 16 North View,

Rosebank, Flowerburn Cottage, Wellow House and Teazle Cottage), Wellow Millennium Green, and users of the Island's Highway and Public Rights of Way network. The applicant has not demonstrated that these identified adverse impacts are capable of satisfactory mitigation. In consequence the proposal is contrary Government advice in the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development), DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and DM16 (Renewables) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

3) The level of information supplied in support of the application is insufficient to demonstrate that potential works required to prevent damage to trees along the indicated delivery route of turbine components to the site is capable of satisfactory mitigation and resolution. In the absence of this information the proposal is contrary to Policy DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Breakdown of the renewable energy schemes

Appendix B – Area site plan

Background Documents

1. Vectis Wind Farm; Landscape Report – A Review of the Environmental Statement Landscape and Visual Impact Chapter (Enplan - June 2012)

   Can be accessed by the following link;
   http://www.iwight.com/council/departments/planning/appsDIP/temptifpdf/syfwlzmednf5pl45nvba2155120706121843.pdf

2. Vectis Wind Farm: Response to Enplan Landscape Report (RPS – June 2012):

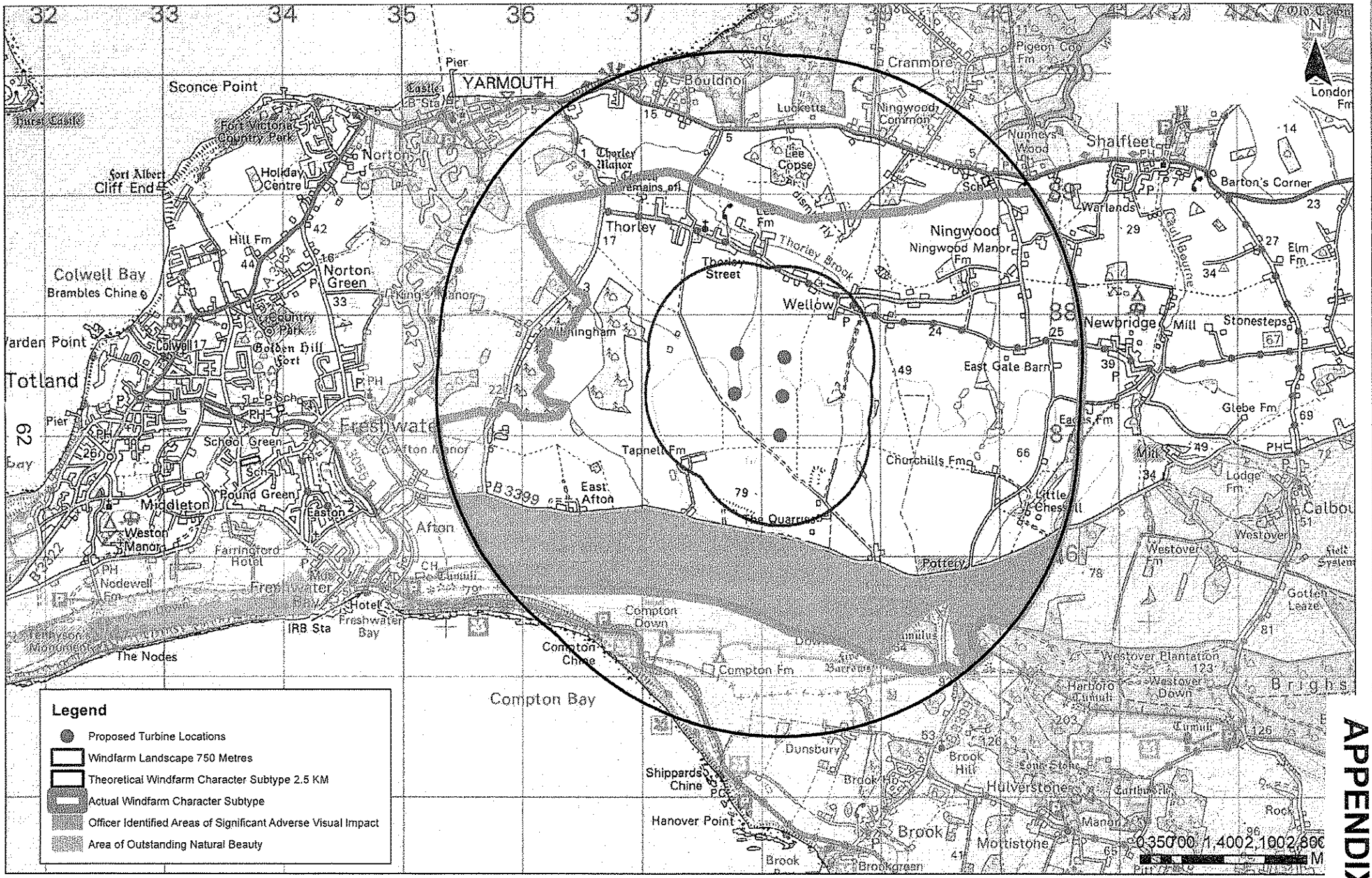
   Can be accessed by the following link;
   http://www.iwight.com/council/departments/planning/appsDIP/temptifpdf/syfwlzmednf5pl45nvba2155120706121946.pdf

APPENDIX A

Scheme	Location	Installed Capacity kW	Operational Stage
Biomass CCHP	Waitrose, East Cowes	140	Operational
Hydro Turbine	Ventnor	0.4	Operational
Landfill Gas	Lynnbottom	1,000	Operational
Private domestic installations of PV, small wind turbines.	Known sites across the Island	5,427	Operational
Solar PV	Medina High School Newport	13.8	Operational
Solar PV	Brading Town Council, Brading	1.3	Operational
Solar PV	Yaverland Public Toilets	1.63	Operational
Solar PV	Osborne Middle School	2.34	Operational
Solar PV	West Wight Sports Centre	11.46	Operational
Solar PV	Yarmouth Harbour Office	8	Operational
Solar PV	Durrants Farm, Porchfield	5,000	Operational
Solar PV	Stone Farm, Blackwater	1,200	Operational
Solar PV	Block A, Barry Way, Newport	100	Operational
Wind Turbine	Parkhurst Prison	15	Operational
Wind Turbine	Yaverland Public Toilets	2.2	Operational
Wind Turbine	Isle of Wight College, Dodnor Lane, Newport	1.5	Operational
Municipal Waste gasification facility	Forest Road Newport	2,300	Operational
Biomas CHP	Cheverton Quarry	200	Permitted, not commenced

Solar PV	Wilmingham Plantation, Freshwater	7,500	Permitted, not commenced
Solar PV	Forest Rd, Newport	50	Permitted, not commenced
Solar PV	Quarr Business Park, Newport	50	Permitted, not commenced
Solar PV	Bathingbourne Farm, Sandown	50	Permitted, not commenced
Solar PV	Oaklea Dairy, Main Road, Alverstone	50	Permitted, not commenced
Wind Turbines	Holliers Farm, Branstone	21	Permitted, not commenced
Wind Turbines (3)	Pondacre Farm	20	Permitted, not commenced
3 x 52 m Wind Turbines	Cheverton Down	1,800	Permitted, not yet commenced
Biomas CHP	Elm Farm	100	Permitted, Not yet commenced
Solar PV	Stone Farm, Blackwater	3,800	Permitted, not yet commenced
Wind Turbine	Osborne Middle School	5	Permitted, not yet commenced
Solar PV	Wellow Manor Farm	50	Permitted, part installed
Solar PV	Lee Farm	5,000	Permitted, partially commenced.
Solar PV	Broadfield Farm, Chapel Lane Merstone	67.7	Permitted, Unknown

Solar PV	Former coal distribution deport, adj Brading Station, Station Road, Brading	50	Permitted, unknown
Solar PV	Cheeks Farm, Merstone Lane, Merstone	50	Permitted, Unknown
Solar PV	Broadfields Farm, Merstone	67.7	Permitted, unknown
Solar PV	Newnham Farm, Ryde	5000	Permitted, unknown
Tidal- powered	Wootton Bridge, High Street, Wootton	500	Permitted, not implemented



Planning Officer's Identified Areas of Significant Adverse Visual Impact arising from the Wellow Wind Farm Proposal

APPENDIX B